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City swaps bullets for needles in death penalty

By Han Manman

By the end of the year, criminals sentenced to death in Beijing will be executed by lethal injection rather than bullets. Authorities have decided to phase out the use of firing squads, which are thought to be cumbersome and traumatic for the executioners and the family of the deceased.

Lethal injections are "cleaner, safer and more convenient," Hu Yunteng, the director of the Supreme People's Court, said.

A special site was built for future executions by Dougezhuang detention house, where most of the city's death row inmates are held.

The Beijing Municipal High People's Court has already made preparations for the shift, including reassigning staff and increasing technical capacity.

Training begins soon for the judicial



A lethal injection room.

CFP Photo

police, whose job will be to deliver the prisoners to the execution chamber and to administer the injections. Medical staff to supervise the use of the drugs and confirm death will also be trained, the official said.

"Lethal injection will be used in all intermediate people's courts, though such a proce-

dures is not possible in the short term because of the high costs of enforcement," Hu said.

"As lethal injection is the most popular method for execution in countries with capital punishment, China will follow suit. It is considered more humane, as it reduces criminals' fear and pain compared with having to face a firing squad," he said.

Lethal injection was legalized in 1997, becoming an alternative form of execution. Over the years, an increasing number of Chinese cities have adopted it as their main method of execution. However, barriers in technical procedures, high costs, and public opinion have kept it from replacing the firing squads.

Many in the public, especially victims' families, cannot accept that a murderer or notorious criminal can be executed without suffering. Some even feel that firing squads

are already too gentle a punishment.

"The move reminds me of Xiong Zhenlin's case," Zhang Xiaochu, one netizen, said. Xiong was a junk collector who murdered eight people, including a two-year-old child, in Luoyang, Suizhou, on January 4.

"I can understand the government's desire to be humane, but legal [sic] injection should be used depending on different cases," Zhang said. "Xiong deserves a bullet. He must be punished for what he did."

Last year, the Supreme Court was empowered to review death sentences to minimize wrongful judgments. This and other moves, such as using lethal injection, are signals that the government is trying to make its legal system more professional, said Liu Renwen, a death penalty researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Animal abusers may face punishment



People met to condemn Shaanxi's dog killers.

CFP Photos

By Han Manman

Animal abuse or harm may soon incur punishment as the nation's first animal rights law takes shape. A preview copy of the bill will be available for public comment in August before it is submitted to the National People's Congress.

China has no laws to protect animals from abuse. People who mistreat or harm animals, such as the ones behind a controversial dog extermination campaign in Hanzhong, Shaanxi Province, cannot be tried. Some of the most shocking abuse cases have attracted nationwide criticism.

Experts are further revising the bill before submitting it to congressional authorities, said Chang Jiwen, a law professor at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences who led the drafting team.

The draft includes violations such as abusing and abandoning pets, which are

not stipulated in the Wild Animal Protection Law that bans trafficking in and killing protected wild animals.

In addition to administrative punishments, such as fines and jail time of up to 15 days, severe violators could be sent to prison, Chang said.

"China is increasingly aware of the importance of animal welfare because it touches on the economy, trade, religion and ethics," Chang said. "There will no longer be an escape for mass dog killers if the draft is passed and becomes law."

Animal abuse is not a new topic in China. It made headlines when a woman posted videos of herself stepping on and crushing the skulls of kittens, farmers smashing pigs into cages so small that they died and the illegal sale of trainloads of kidnapped cats to restaurants.

In the past month alone, authorities in Hanzhong, Shaanxi Province, rounded

up and killed 30,000 dogs when eight people died of rabies.

"Rabies is no excuse for killing so many dogs. The government should not have targeted every dog," Chang said.

He said rather than the dogs, the main cause of the rabies outbreak was irresponsible doctors affiliated with the local government, which did not follow the required prevention measures that guard against outbreaks.

Animal lovers across the country applauded the news that the legislation is likely to be submitted.

"I fully support the draft. Pets also have a right to live," Zhang Xin, a cat lover in Beijing, said.

"You can tell a lot about a civilization by how it treats its animals," Zhang said, adding that although a law cannot solve all problems, it will make people think twice and help curb abuse.

Beijing among Asia's most expensive

By Jin Zhu

Beijing has become the fifth most expensive city in Asia, behind only the Japanese cities of Tokyo, Nagoya, Yokohama and Kobe, according to a survey from ECA International, a human resources service provider.

The biannual survey compared 125 items from a list of consumer goods and services commonly consumed by international assignees in 370 locations all over the world.

The list included grains, oil, dairy products, meat, fish, fresh fruit, vegetables, drinks, tobacco, clothing, electronics and cars, in addition to average restaurant prices.

Five cities in China, including Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangzhou, have ranked among the top 10 most expensive cities in Asia.

The capital, which surpassed Hong Kong, which has a high level of consumption, jumped from 104th to 26th most expensive city in the world within a year.

The rankings of Shanghai and Hong Kong rocketed to 28th and 29th up from 111th and 98th respectively.

Linda Teruel, a foreigner who works for a Beijing-based toy company, said the cost of living is more expensive than when she moved to the city two years ago.

"I have to pay 20 to 30 yuan for a cup of coffee now, which is much more than I paid in many other cities," she said.

"People coming from Western countries into Asia will notice an obvious change in their daily costs compared with 12 months ago, which is due both to the impact of the economic recession in Europe and the US and the continuous strengthening of Asian currencies," Lee Quane, regional director of Asia in ECA International, said.

According to the survey, many companies are still paying staff sent to Asia using their home currency, which slashes the purchasing power of their staff, he said.

"If the companies paid their international assignees half in their home currency and half in the local currency, the impact will be reduced," he said.

New road to recognition

Gov's shuffle gives NGOs hope for legal status



Kids at Sun Village are supported by donations and the village's enterprising operations.

CFP Photos

Embarrassing identity

Chinese NGOs began to develop in the early 1980s, but their definition is a sticky topic. Strictly speaking, none of the NGOs was purely "none-governmental," since the government led the voluntary service movement in the 1980s from which they evolved.

In reality, many NGOs like the China Charity Federation and China Youth Development Foundation are quasi-governmental organizations. Although there are many "grassroots NGOs," these must submit to an examination and approval system to be registered.

"All we ever wanted was to find a 'home' to legally settle down," Zhang Shuqin, the village head, says. The first Sun Village was founded in 1996 in Shaanxi Province. Zhang, the founder, was a supervisor at the local prison and saw how many of the prisoners' children were left to a poor life, many having no choice but to turn to crime. She set up the village to gather the kids to live and study. The children of about 400 prisoners live in six Sun Villages in Beijing and Shaanxi, Jiangxi, Jiangxi, Qinghai and Henan provinces.

Trouble started with Sun Village's suspected fiscal black hole. *China Week* reporters accused Sun Village of earning money under the guise of a charity because it engaged in profitable activities. The Sun Village in Shunyi District has 50,000 fruit trees, a chicken farm, a deer farm and an ostrich farm and a big tourist restaurant which can seat 300. People can claim a tree for picking by paying an annual fee of 100 to 500 yuan. The animals are sold when they grow up. Every weekend, Sun Village hosts an auction of endowments unusable by its children: items like adult

vintage apparel.

According to the Regulations on Foundation Administration, non-profitable organizations can profit if they are using for charity. But whether Zhang and Sun Village have used the profits on their children is unclear. This is why supervision is indispensable. However, since Sun Village is not registered as a government NGO, meaning it is not recognized as a

charity by the Bureau of Civil Affairs, no one is in charge of supervising its finances.

Sun Village did register with one government department in 2003: the Beijing Industrial and Commercial Department.

"The Bureau of Civil Affairs refused to be our operating official, which means it rejected our registration," Zhang says. She blames it on the bureau's unwillingness to take on an organization with so many risks, especially child flight or death.

With no other choice, Zhang tried to find Sun Village status as a legal entity at the industrial and commercial department and started the Educational Advising Center to form a corporation and pay taxes.

At the time, this was standard practice for NGOs. However, two years later, the State Administration for Industry and Commerce ordered all NGOs that were engaged in charity work to drop their enterprise registration and register with the Bureau of Civil Affairs.

Since then, Sun Village has been stuck in limbo.

"Who wants to operate without a license?" Zhang says. Because of its predicament, the local tax bureau is very lenient to Sun Village. "They have to save some money to raise the kids," Wang Wenfu, the deputy director of the Shunyi Tax Inspection Bureau said.

Some orgs luckier

China Hope Organization reg-

By Zheng Lu

Last month, *China Week's* report about a charity called Beijing Sun Village brought the organization some very unwanted government attention. Though it calls itself an NGO, its identity is not acknowledged by any official body. The report put Sun Village and thousands of its fellows at an edge.



Volunteers donating relief packages to the quake-hit areas.

istered and was accepted as a subordinate of the China Social Work Association in March.

Ta Linfu, founder of China Hope, attributed his NGO's success in winning legal recognition to his effective administration methods and enterprise operations.

China Hope first opened in Inner Mongolia. Its aim is to help disadvantaged groups and to protect the ecosystem. The organization operates projects with the help of volunteers. As many as 100,000 volunteers nationwide work for China Hope on its activities.

"We don't raise money like an agency. Instead, we connect donors

and problem areas," Ta says. China Hope's activities get volunteers involved in the solution.

Ta says his evaluation service provides the transparency for donor entities to see where their donations go and how the donations improved their image. He says it has encouraged donors to attend more charity projects.

But the main element of its success is its administrative methods. "We are ahead of the central government in NGO administration," Ta says. China Hope adopted many administrative methods used by international NGOs and devoted a lot of time to personnel training. It has cooperated with Beijing Normal University since last year to set up a *Master's Degree* program for charity administration. Ta also started a corporate arm separate from China Hope. "Part of the profits are used to pay our personnel," he says.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs named China Hope as an honorable mention for its Behavior Model Prize at the annual China Charity Prize. It was the first time a grassroots NGO was shortlisted for the prize. Last December, Ta Linfu won the title of National Outstanding Charity Worker and was received by President Hu Jintao at the Great Hall of the People.

Ta said the way to succeed as a grassroots NGO is to cooperate on projects with legal institutions such as universities and the media. "When an organization is popularly accepted, there is a good chance the government will accept it," he says.

Another possibility

By the end of 2008, the country's list of registered NGOs numbered 400,000. According to estimates from the NGO Research Institute of Tsinghua University, if grassroots NGOs were included, the number could be in the millions.

Two months ago, the Beijing

municipal government issued a social organized work scheme under which 10 appointed social organizations will act as NGO supervisors. The scheme liberates the administration from its former role as approver and supervisor of all NGOs. The 10 named supervisors include the Beijing General Labor Union, Beijing Women's Federation and Beijing Red Cross Society. Any NGO seeking to register needs to apply to the supervisor that is its nearest match. After fiscal investigation and other processes, the NGO will be supervised by its registrar.

"Many NGOs have applied since the change, and they are now being examined," though they may have to wait a while for approval, an official surnamed Ma at Beijing Social Work Organization Committee says. "Policies take a while before relevant departments start to follow them."

Last week, Sun Village welcomed personnel sent by the Civil Affairs Ministry to investigate its fiscal status. Village head Zhang hopes their visit is a sign of the village's bright future. "They recorded everything and said they would file a report with the department, then inform us of the result," Zhang says.

Ta Linfu attributes most of these changes to the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. "It made the government realize how important grassroots NGOs can be," he says. The actions of those organizations won trust and support from both the people and the government. They provided supplementary relief and psychological consultation.

"NGOs help in many ways to relieve the government's burden," Ta says. The new method of NGO registration is a signal that their role, in relation to the government, is changing. For NGOs that want a "legal identity," "this will be a reshuffle, and only the fittest will survive," Ta says.

Breaking down autism's wall

NGO helps parents educate disabled children

By Annie Wei

China has never collected data about its autistic children, but a Reuters report in April said one in every 166 children in the West has some degree of the condition. With 300 million children under the age of 14, as many as 1.8 million Chinese children may be autistic.

Today, the country has 100 training schools that specialize in educating autistic children. Most of the schools operate as NGOs and were founded by parents.

Lu Min, 40, a staff member of the Guangzhou Yang Ai Special Children Parent Club, starts her workday at 8:30 am. She handles club issues and designs activities for the group.

The club organizes four to five activities each month for parents: while volunteers watch their children, the parents meet to share information and support, and to learn how to better care for their children.

Lu has been in the club since its founding. Her 15-year-old boy has Down's syndrome.

"Like parents with autistic children now, we didn't know who to talk to or where to look for help during the first three years," Lu says.

That was when she found the parent club, then newly founded by a British couple: Dr Brian Stratford (1931-2003) and his wife Maureen Stratford, who came to Guangdong Maternity and Children's Hospital in 1996 to help children with developmental disabilities.

In her 12 years with the club, Lu has transitioned from member to staff.

The parent club was one of China's first groups to help parents care for their autistic children, Feng Xin, 37, its executive director, says. Today it has more than 1,000 members, half whom are children with autism.

Parents need help

Having an autistic child can be a financial and emotional challenge for any family. **Some abandon their children on the street or to social welfare orphanages in desperation.**

Lu says the greatest challenge many of the parents face is accepting their child can never be completely "normal."

With long-term training, an autistic child can learn to survive in society, but he or she will never be like other children, Lu says.

"It's hard to tell them the truth outright, but it's not fair to them or their child if they cling to false hope," Lu says.

"We try to help parents have realistic expectations for their child, and to accept their child for who he is," Feng says.

Parents whose child has a developmental disability face a psychological struggle. When they overcome



Volunteers visit Guangzhou Yang Ai Special Children Parent Club every week. Photos provided by Guangzhou Yang Ai



Parents' workshop

the shock of learning their child is different, they start to worry about his or her future. Many get stuck in denial, spoil their children or insist there must be a "cure."

Tian Huiping, who founded Stars and Rain Education Institute for Autism in Beijing, told CNN she had considered a murder-suicide with her autistic son. It was only in desperation that she turned to a school for autism.

The parents face pressure. They wonder what will happen to their child in the future. Caring for an autistic child demands sacrifice: career included. And the grandparents frequently lump all blame on the mother. Few older people know about autism and similar disorders, and believe anything wrong with a child is a direct result of the mother's carelessness, she says.

Since the second half of 2008, the parent club has provided more services like workshops, psychological counseling, expert lectures and access to social workers. **Parents can go to discuss how the child has affected their sex life, as well as how they feel and the pressures they face.**

Autism in the countryside

Li-Ching Lee, an epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, says countryside families face an even greater burden: many must travel to big cities to find the care that is unavailable in their hometowns.

After visiting one county in Shanxi Province, club director Feng said the contrast in attitudes to autistic children between the city and countryside could not be starker.

Autism awareness in the countryside is startlingly low. The parents' concerns are also different: in the city, parents worry about their child's education and future, but rural families question how the child can earn money for the family and marry.

For these families, the feeling of disappointment is even stronger, Feng says.

"The way to help city families with autistic children is totally different from what we have to do in rural areas," she says.

More support for autism

The first case of autism was diagnosed in 1943, but no diagnosis was made in China prior to 1983. In the past, "autism" was thought simply as another way to describe an introvert: not a mental disorder. But 26 years of education campaigns have spread awareness.

The government has set up a fund for autism study and research, though it has yet to tap any grassroots NGOs.

Feng says it is not that the government cares less about autism: in reality, the country comes up short in funding aid for all kinds of disabilities. It never recognized autism as a disability until 2006.

There are eight kinds of disabilities defined by the government, and autism is listed among its mental ones. By law, people age 16 or older who are diagnosed with autism should have access to disability funds. **However, the children require access to special education when they are 13 to 14 months old, Feng says.**

Devoted teachers

Not all parents involved in autism education became so because of their child.

At the parent club, most staff members and social workers have a happy family and a healthy child. Feng, for example, has been with the organization for 11 years. She could have had more opportunities and better pay at a joint-venture firm, especially with her English skills.

After quitting teaching English in Tianjin, she decided to go to Guangzhou to experience life in another city. Her first job interview there was with the British couple, the Stratfords.

After a few years, the founder Brian Stratford told her the reason she was hired: "I saw a sparkle in your eyes."

Most others who passed the interview are still working at the parent club.

"This job offers the chance to always be surprised by how amazing love is," Feng says.

About the parent club

The Guangzhou Yang Ai Special Children Parent Club is a registered NGO helping children with developmental disabilities and their families. It was founded by Dr. Brian Stratford (1931-2003) and the Guangdong Maternity and Children's Hospital.

Stratford is an authority in educating children with special needs, especially those with Down's syndrome. His wife, Maureen Stratford, is also an expert with 40 years of experience in the field.

The club welcomes volunteers and donations. As one of the few schools in China that provide English service, Yang Ai also welcomes foreigners who need help or want to get involved in their community.

Contact Feng Xin for more information.



Dr Brian Stratford and his wife

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Web site: yangai.org

Leaking Green Dam protects nobody

The newly created Ministry of Industry and Information Technology is facing its biggest challenge yet: Its policy that all personal computers need to come with porn-filtering software has generated controversy both at home and abroad.

"There are obvious questions about it based on common sense, just as ordinary people who see a leaking dam know it's dangerous even if they have no technical knowledge about it," one blogger said.

Official: Use of software is optional

An official with the ministry said Tuesday that computer makers are required to include a government-sponsored porn-filtering software, but that it is up to buyers to decide whether they want to use it.

"PC makers are only required to save the program's setup files on the hard drives of their computers, or provide a CD-ROM containing the program with packaged PCs," the official at the ministry's

department of software service, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told *China Daily*.

Users have the final say on the installation of the Green Dam-Youth Escort, so it is misleading to say the government compels PC users to use the software, the official said.

The filter has to be included in all computers sold on the mainland from July 1 – and the reason is

purely to protect youngsters from Internet pornography and violence, the government said.

Last weekend, major security flaws in Green Dam were reported by a group of computer professors from the University of Michigan.

"We are aware of the software's security problems, and the developer was told to rush software patches to solve the problem," the official said. "It's perfectly normal

for an Internet filter to have security vulnerabilities."

"The government only purchased the software. It was the developer who decided what content needed to be blocked to protect youngsters from unhealthy information on the Internet."

The official also said that all security problems reported by the professors from the University of Michigan have been fixed. **(Agencies)**



Green Dam Girl

The latest onslaught on the software by netizens is a series of images featuring Green Dam Girl. The character carries a rabbit – the Green Dam software's mascot – and wears a River Crab badge, a pun about "harmonious society" that Chinese netizens use to mock Internet censorship. She carries a bucket of paint to wipe out online filth.

Developer: No piracy in Green Dam

By Huang Daohen

If things proceed without any more glitches, the ministry's new policy would make Green Dam's two developers – Zhengzhou-based Jinhui Computer System Engineering and Beijing Dazheng Human Language Technology Academy – the most profitable software companies during the current financial crisis.

But a US firm, Solid Oak Software of Santa Barbara, California, recently claimed that parts of Green Dam had been pirated from its own filtering software.

The company said on June 15 that Green Dam contains parts of the code of its CyberSitter filtering software, as well as an exact copy of its graphical interfaces. It plans to file an injunction against the Chinese developers.

"I don't know how far you can try and reach into China and try to stop stuff like this," Solid Oak's founder, Brian Milburn, was quoted as saying. "We're still trying to assess what they're doing."

Jinhui refuted the allegation the following day, saying the so-called stolen portions of the software were a list of suspected pornographic Web addresses rather than the programming code vital to the filter.

Jinhui said Green Dam's core relies on an image-filtering technology, while the database of Web addresses was non-core content that could be gathered online.

The company regarded the copying accusation as "ridiculous."

But Green Dam's problems do not end here. Jiangmin, the leading domestic software firm, said this week that the filter has serious security vulnerabilities.

The company said the software has a backdoor that hackers can exploit with maliciously crafted Web sites, after which they can place on PCs trojans that can spread viruses or even take over systems remotely.

The security loophole apparently exists in Green Dam's Web site-filtering function.

About 50 million Internet users in the country have already installed Green Dam, with the number expected to jump in July when the software is packaged with all PCs shipped domestically.

Jiangmin is suggesting that Green Dam users stop operating the software's Web site-filtering function until the company can release a patch.

Netizens: Main questions about Green Dam

Netizens have voiced strong suspicions over the filtering software's value, and below are three of their main concerns.

Question 1:

Was it necessary for the government to invest 41.7 million yuan on this software and force computer manufacturers to include it with every PC sold in China? Doesn't it constitute a monopoly to impose a particular software on computer buyers who legally have the right to refuse a software they do not want?

A less controversial method would be to offer the filter online free of charge to those who think they really need it, such as parents worried about unhealthy content on the Internet.

Money will be saved and can be channeled to helping children in poverty-stricken areas who might have never used computers.

Question 2:

Is Green Dam an effective tool to filter pornography on the Internet?

Unfortunately, according to netizens who have tested the software, it blocked some pages containing photos of the famous cartoon fat cat Garfield while it let through pages with graphic sexual images.

Question 3:

Is there a better way for our leaders to make decisions?

Besides a lack of public hearings and extensive discussions prior to the ministry imposing the regulation, the ministry seems to be rushing its enforcement – only 20 days after it was first announced to the public.

Some people believe the software project is tinged with corruption.

Greater transparency and more open communication lines are key to successful public administration. Decision-making behind closed doors will only lead to ineffective policies, dissent and even anger among the public.

(CRI English)



The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's new move generated heated debate both at home and abroad over "Internet censorship." CFP Photo

Expert: Chinese people not oppressed on the Internet

The Chinese government does not restrict its citizens' use of the Web as much as people in the West believe, a US academic at the Hong Kong University said.

"Many people overseas have this impression that Internet users are living in fear or that they're always worried about the police calling up or knocking

on their door," said Rebecca MacKinnon, an assistant professor of new media at Hong Kong University's Journalism and Media Studies Centre.

"Actually what's happening is much more subtle. There's a contradiction that's difficult to explain to the West and the outside world about China and about the Internet," she said.

"On the one hand, (the government) has made a lot of effort to control content on the Internet. On the other hand, the space for conversation thanks to the Internet has grown tremendously."

Referring to Green Dam, MacKinnon said consumers have the final say over whether a mass-market consumer product is good or bad for them. **(Agencies)**

Country sells US bonds to 'show concern'

A decision by China to reduce its US Treasury holdings suggests concern about the US's attitude towards its economic woes, economists said Wednesday.

The remarks, coming after the government's cut of bonds valued US \$4.4 billion (30 billion yuan), were in contrast to an earlier statement in Beijing which had said the recent sell-off was a routine transaction.

"China is implying to the US, more or less, that it should adopt

a more pragmatic and responsible attitude to maintain the stability of the dollar," He Maohun, a political scientist at Tsinghua University, said.

According to US Treasury data issued Monday, China owned US \$763.5 billion in US securities in April, down from US \$767.9 billion in March.

It was the first month since June 2008 the country did not purchase more US T-bills.

Zhang Bin, a researcher at the

Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the move showed a more cautious attitude.

"It is unclear whether the reduction will continue because the amount is so small. But the cut signals the caution of governments or institutions toward US Treasury bonds," Zhang told Xinhua news agency.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Tuesday that its purchases of US Treasuries remained based on "security, liquidity and

value preservation."

For Zhao Xijun, deputy director of the Finance and Securities Research Institute of Renmin University, China may have reduced its holding of US Treasuries simply because it needed the money.

Zhao said the sell-off could have been in order to pay for its own economic stimulus package.

"The reduction was a result of composite factors, such as the investment need and the market change," Zhao said.

Coca-Cola Zero safe for China market

Coca-Cola said its business in China will not be affected by the ban on Coca-Cola Zero in Venezuela.

"The Coca-Cola Co is absolutely confident that all of its products, including Coca-Cola Zero, are safe and the ingredients meet China's quality standards and comply with local regulations," it said in an emailed statement Wednesday.

"We continue to work with health officials in Venezuela to address the concerns they have expressed about the reported detection of sodium cyclamate in Coca-Cola Zero. While it should be noted that cyclamate is a safe, low-calorie sweetener ... it is not the sweetener used in Coca-Cola Zero in Venezuela."

(By Huang Daohen)

Analyst Bonds still good value for China

US Treasury bonds are an important part of China's foreign currency reserve investment because they are comparatively safe, with the US financial market the largest in the world and highly liquid, experts said.

"A breakdown of the selling of the US \$4.4 billion in Treasury bonds reveals that there was no cut to medium and long-term Treasury bonds, which indicates China still has confidence in such securities in the long-run, despite a coming inflation risk

under the US's quantitative monetary policy," Li Jianfeng, an economist with Shanghai Securities, said.

"The cut was to short-term bond holdings. Technically, it was reasonable because the price of short-term bonds rose in

April, which offered a good opportunity to take profits from the market," Li said.

The yield of one-year US Treasury bonds was 0.49 percent at the end of April, Shanghai-based Wind data shows.

(Agencies)

IBM steps up health care application work

IBM is expanding work on applications for use in Chinese hospitals after spotting an opportunity in the country's massive spending plan for health care reform.

It hopes to work with the government to provide hospitals with platforms for collaboration and information-sharing designed at the company's new health care product lab in Beijing. Among the applications in development are those that display electronic health records shared between hospitals, allow virtual conferences between doctors and interpret terms used in traditional Chinese medicine for digital classification.

The government announced plans this year to spend 850 billion yuan to achieve universal health care. While the government has not made clear how much of that sum is for IT spending, the package still creates major opportunities for health care products, Matt Wang, vice president of IBM's China Development Labs, said.

"The market is one of the biggest," Wang said. "This is much bigger than telecoms or even banking." (Agencies)

Freudenberg Group continues Chinese growth

By Gan Tian

The Freudenberg Group, a German company offering technically challenging product solutions and services, is continuing its commitment to grow in the Chinese market.

On January 1 this year, Freudenberg Nonwovens' filter division became a stand-alone business group known as Freudenberg & Vilene Filter China.

The group, which operates two production facilities in Suzhou and Changchun, contributes to improving the efficiency of industrial processes, preserving resources and protecting the environment.

Freudenberg said it benefits from a conservative financing policy geared to a long-term presence in the country. The German group of companies has been pursuing a risk diversification strategy with regard to both customer groupings and regions for several years.

Market watch

Country's hardwood market remains weak

By Huang Daohen

The country's demand for hardwood may continue to be low this year as the current economic downturn limits public needs for furniture, the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), representing 100 US hardwood exporters told a recent press conference.

"This year will be another tough year for the market, and China's furniture industry is not immune to global recession," Michael Snow, executive director of AHEC, said during the council's 14th Southeast Asia and Greater China Convention held in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, last week.

Customs data shows furniture exports rose 16.9 percent to US \$27.2 billion (186 billion yuan) in 2008 while imports increased 10.3 percent to US \$1.18 billion. But previous years have seen over 30 percent year-on-year growth on exports and imports.

For AHEC, last year saw a 15 percent drop in value from one year earlier of its members' hardwood exports to China, though it remains the largest destination of US hardwoods, Snow said.

According to the council's latest statistics, global export of US hardwood was US \$1.13 billion last year and China's market share was 16.6 percent, topping the list by volume since 1999 when the US became the largest hardwood products exporter worldwide.

This January, US lumber exports to China rose 73 percent compared to December, but were still down 6 percent from a year earlier, Snow said. Lumber exports accounted for nearly half of all US hardwood products.

"But the worst times are behind us and we may see a turnaround in a couple years, possibly in 2010," he said.

Echoing Snow, John Chan, AHEC regional director for Southeast Asia and Greater China, said he believes the hardwood market will benefit from the government's huge stimulus package. "Once the effect of the package turns out, there will be great demand for hardwood for fundamental construction works," Chan said.

Snow said another key challenge that weakens further the demand for hardwood is from alternative materials such as plas-

tics and steel. However, users should understand that wood is renewable, unlike fossil-fuel or mineral-based products, and has the lowest energy consumption and carbon emissions among commonly used materials, he said.

AHEC recently released a study on the lawful harvesting and sustainability of US hardwood exports, confirming that US hardwoods are derived from legal and well-managed forests.

The AHEC 14th Southeast Asia and Greater China Convention, opened last week in Shenyang, Liaoning Province.

Themed "The Sustainability and Diversity of US Hardwood - Manufacturing and Design Solution," the two-day convention, organized by AHEC and supported by the Liaoning Province Furniture Association, called for sustainable development of forestry resources and promoted mutual development between the US hardwood and the China industry and market.

AHEC, headquartered in Washington DC, is the leading trade association driving market development programs for the US hardwood industry.



Michael Snow, executive director of AHEC
Photo provided by Ketchum Beijing

Analyst

There is still a growing market for US wood exports to China, Nero Lee, an industrial analyst with Oriental Securities, said.

The composition of US wood exports has changed dramatically over the years. Most of the decline came from falling

sales of softwood logs while the majority of recent growth has stemmed from vigorous sales of hardwood logs, lumber and veneer, Lee said.

The market for lumber, paneling, furniture and other products continues to expand as China prefers hardwood furniture for

its look and durability. About a third of China's wood use goes to furniture production.

Lee said growth has been concentrated in coastal provinces since the recession, but that demand is climbing in other regions.

Foreign exporters doing business in China should main-

tain long-term relationships with domestic importers, buyers and wholesalers, Lee said.

Exporters also need to actively promote their products here, and locate and train local buyers as well as study the Chinese market to adapt their merchandise to customer demands, he said.

Ancient relic or clubhouse

The Palace of Soong Mei-ling faces identity crisis



Local official's plan to convert The Palace of Soong Mei-ling into a clubhouse generated controversy.

CFP Photo

By Jin Zhu

The Palace of Soong Mei-ling, a major historical and cultural site under state protection in Nanjing, might need to redefine itself and its patrons as a result of old age and financial difficulties. One possibility is to be converted into a clubhouse for the rich.

Last month, the management of Jinling Hotel, which has run the palace since 1990, gathered several conservation experts and officials from Nanjing's administration of cultural heritage to discuss the assignment of management rights to the palace, *Beijing News* reported.

The hotel seemed to be hinting that it wanted to give up claims to the palace.

"Since it has not been repaired for some time, considering the regulations for the protection of cultural relics, we suggest that the palace cease

being a public site and be strictly run like a business operation," Zhao Yuyuan, vice general manager of Jinling Hotel, said.

Most of the palace's original furnishings have been preserved, but the rest of the place is in poor condition. Rooms on the first floor have been converted into a kitchen and snack areas. A banquet hall on the second floor is often used as a venue for wedding ceremonies and the like.

"The palace isn't well-maintained, and because it has been used for commercial purposes, it does not look like a historical and cultural site like the nearby Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum," Li Jia, a college student, said.

Zhao said they spend 200,000 yuan a year on its basic maintenance. On top of this, they have to pay monthly salaries to 30 people employed at the palace. "Our annual income

is just enough to keep things going," he said.

"Without sufficient funds to support a full restoration of the palace, the cultural relic is in danger," he said.

Yu Jinbao, deputy director of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum Administration Bureau, which managed the site until 1984, said the municipality cannot easily take over the palace's management.

"Before taking back the right to its management, many problems first need to be solved, such as what will happen to the palace's staff members," Yu said. "This request cannot be accommodated within a short period of time."

The palace, built in 1931, was a weekend retreat for Chiang Kai-shek and his wife Song Mei-ling. The palace features both Chinese and Western architecture, and includes a reception room, a secretary's office and a living room.

Backgrounder

Protection faces severe situation

Cultural relic protection is under severe threat in China as criminals still seek profits from relics and city reconstruction threatens to urban cultural heritage.

The remarks were made by Shan Jixiang, director of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, at a recent national working conference on cultural relics protection.

Shan analyzed some major problems existing in national cultural relics protection.

The safety of housed relics is worrisome, he said. Since 1998, eight cases have been uncovered involving several museum workers and 268 smuggled relics.

Driven by huge profits, criminals are active in digging ancient tombs and cultural heritage sites. They usually employ modern communication and transportation instruments and have destroyed many graves with historical value.

Shan suggested that there is an urgent need for more efficient management by local government.

Statistics show China has nearly 400,000 known unmovable cultural relics above ground and underground. So far, the State Council, the cabinet, has listed 1,271 cultural sites under state protection and by 2015, the number may rise to 1,800. There are 7,000 cultural sites under provincial-level protection and more than 60,000 under municipal and county-level protection. (By Huang Daohen)

Comment

Return management rights to the government

The state owns cultural heritage sites and assigns their preservation to municipal or provincial governments. But it is common that some of the management rights have been turned over to business groups.

The value of a cultural heritage site lies in its authenticity and integrity. The Palace has been managed separately from Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum for years and it has suffered. Management rights should be returned to the municipality as soon as possible, otherwise it will be ruined as a business

operation.

— Cai Xiansha, chairman of Nanjing Taiwanese Association

Strengthen hotel's sense of responsibility

It is not correct to decide whether or not to manage the palace based on its profits. The hotel has to consider its social relevance and share in the responsibility of preserving it, instead of looking at its management right as a burden. To improve the palace's profitability, the hotel should see where it has gone wrong.

— Su Youchun, deputy director of Cultural Relics Preservation Department, Jiangsu Provin-

cial Administration of Cultural Heritage

Business operation not suitable

How could they make the suggestion to stop the palace from opening to the public? It is quite baffling. As a major historical and cultural site under state protection, the palace should not be managed by a hotel, let alone be run like any regular business operation. The palace cannot continue to go unrepaired, and commercial functions in the palace should be limited.

— Liu Xianjue, history professor from Southeast University

Debate of the week

Plagiarism, all over again

A major university in Beijing has thrown a student out of its doctorate program for plagiarizing a research paper and smearing a vice headmaster's name in the process, in another blow to Chinese academia.

Beijing Normal University student Yang Lun, a PhD candidate in the school's philosophy and social science institute, plagiarized more than 80 percent of another researcher's work and published it in the leading *Philosophy Research* monthly in April, the *Oriental Morning Post* reported Tuesday.

Yang's tutor, Liaoning University vice headmaster Lu Jierong, was also disgraced as his name was on the plagiarized work, the paper's original author said.

"Their behavior deeply hurt me and tainted the country's academic landscape," Wang Lingyun, a lecturer at Yunnan University, said.

"They only revised a few sentences at the paper's beginning and summary part, and added some footnotes and references," he said.

The copycat case is among a growing number of plagiarized papers colleges have identified from students or professors.

In March, an associate professor at Zhejiang University's college of Pharmaceutical Science reportedly wrote eight theses by plagiarizing the research result from a former doctoral supervisor.

Yang has apologized to Wang over the phone, and said he signed his tutor's name on the paper as it was hard for a student to publish a paper in a major academic magazine.

Country debates sex change rules

The country is set to formalize rules covering sex-change operations to ensure that all those who want the surgery meet certain requirements.

Those who apply for a sex change must be single, over age 20 and have wanted the surgery for at least five years.

The proposed new guidelines, posted on the Ministry of Health's Web site, have been distributed for public discussion.

There could be hundreds of thousands of people wanting the surgery, domestic media reports say.

The new rules aim to improve oversight of sex-change operations in the country and ensure the safety of patients, the ministry says.

It says those who want surgery must have openly lived and worked as a member of the opposite sex for at least two years.

They must have received psychological counseling for at least a year and have told their families about their desire for a sex change.

The Public Security Bureau must also agree to change the person's sex on his or her identity documents.

It was not initially clear whether or not the police would approve this change.

These proposed rules show the government is becoming increasingly concerned about a group of people who are largely hidden in society, one expert said. (Agencies)

Norwegian jazz trio's exploration tour nears an end

By Wang Yu

Norwegian jazz band Excess Luggage will round off their China tour with a performance tonight at Jimmy's Thai Kitchen. With the assistance of the Norwegian embassy, band members Vigleik Storaas, Steinar Nickelsen and Hakon Mjaset Johansen have brought their music to seven oft-overlooked cities, including

Yinchuan, Lanzhou and Kunming.

Although the band had already performed in the country twice, it wanted to explore the local music scene in greater depth. "This tour was very different from any other tours we've done, in China or elsewhere," keyboardist Steinar Nickelsen said.

"In Lanzhou, we talked to a classroom-full of music students and teachers and

were really surprised by some of the questions they asked. We were pleased to see they were really into jazz, even if – or maybe because – their understanding of it was a bit different from ours," he said.

In 2002, Nickelsen was named "Young Norwegian Jazz Musician of the Year," the same honor bestowed on Johansen two years before that. Storaas, one of Norway's most distinguished piano play-

ers, has been recognized with two Spellemannspris awards – the Scandinavian country's equivalent of the Grammys.

The artists, who met at the conservatory of music in Trondheim, Norway, formed Excess Luggage in 2003. The name referred to the heavy luggage that musicians carted around because of their instruments, which translated into extra charges and regular battles with airlines companies.

"If you look at airline regulations, it's almost impossible to bring anything. But it normally works out after some flirting, begging, bribing or threatening. Drummers have it rough, because a drum kit weighs a lot. Keyboard players also suffer. Our trio, with our drums, Hammond organ and piano, seems to have come up with the worst possible combination for a band wishing to travel," Nickelsen said.

But they have managed to arrive in various foreign destinations without incident. To many listeners, the band's lack of guitar sounds and its combination of organ, piano and drum music are rare and admirable.

"The biggest difference lies in the music generated by a piano trio compared to an organ trio. And that was what caught our interest – the potential to create unusual music by combining the two traditions. We're all pretty flexible players, so it hasn't been a problem arguing about the 'only way' to do things," Nickelsen said.

With its fusion of an organ's groovy feel and a piano's melodic style, Excess Luggage may sound contemporary but cold to local listeners. But Nickelsen is confident Chinese music lovers will give the band a chance.

"In general, I'll say that the Chinese audience is very nice to play for because they are very interested in the music. Even though they might not know anything about jazz, they still listen and enjoy it. This attitude is not always present in Europe, since many people will refuse to listen to music they don't know. This is one reason playing in China is very rewarding for us," he said.



Improvisation is a large part of the band's performance.

Photo provided by Excess Luggage

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The Dong People ask their children to learn their folk songs.

Photo provided by FleishmanHillard

UNDP and Bank of China spearhead promotion of ethnic minority culture

By He Jianwei

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Bank of China signed an agreement last Thursday to promote in 2009 and 2010 culture-based development for the nation's ethnic minorities.

The project, titled Show the World: Culture-based Development Goodwill Action for Ethnic Minorities in China, aims to explore ways to preserve ethnic culture and promote cultural diversity as an engine of development in ethnic minority communities. The country has 55 ethnic minorities, representing 8.4 percent of the total population.

"Cultural diversity is crucial to the UN's development assistance to national efforts to enhance human development and achieve the Millennium Development Goals," said Khalid Malik, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in China.

"It is about expanding individual choices to lead a full life through one's values and without losing the respect of others or being excluded from choices." The Millennium Development

Goals are eight goals the UN hopes to achieve by 2015, including halving global poverty.

Chinese musician and UN goodwill ambassador Zhu Zheqin, better known as Dadawa, will lead a team of artists to Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Xinjiang, Qinghai and Inner Mongolia in the next two years to record ethnic groups' folk music.

"From my years of travelling, the country's beautiful natural landscapes and the minorities' heartfelt humanity have been my sources of inspiration. It is my great honor to become a UNDP China National Goodwill Ambassador and to be able to devote myself to helping improve the livelihood of ethnic minorities," Dadawa said.

The musician has been recording folk music in ethnic minority areas since 2007. She became involved in cultural preservation after finding out in 2005 that "King of Long Tune," a Mongolian traditional folk song, has been forgotten by its people. Two years later, she heard that the master of sutra chants in Tibet died.

The two events "signaled to me that our rich culture is slowly being extinguished

and I began to consider how to protect these diverse cultures," Dadawa said.

When she and her team visited the Dong people in Guizhou, they discovered that some ethnic minorities have already begun making efforts to preserve their heritage. "The Dong people send their children to learn folk songs and hope the succeeding generations will preserve their ancestors' culture," Dadawa said.

The second step in the UNDP-China Bank's two-year project is to promote ethnic minorities' handicrafts.

Dadawa will work with the UN body to help strengthen the economic potential of minority areas. They aim to accomplish this by supporting the marketing efforts of ethnic cultural products, generating partnerships with marketing professionals and cultural enterprises, and assisting minority groups find their product niche.

"Chinese minorities have a rich, distinctive lifestyle and their own dialects. Their unique social, cultural and historical backgrounds represent an important part of China's culture and history," UNDP's Malik said.

Thailand extends visa-free entry period

By Han Manman

To lure more tourists to Thailand, the country plans to extend its visa-free entry period up to the end of the year.

Kasit Piromya, the Thai foreign minister, said during a recent visit to Beijing that the Southeast Asian nation has been trying to attract more Chinese tourists. The visa-free entry – a savings of 230 yuan for each visa application – is one such scheme.

"We have a target of 3 million Chinese people visiting Thailand by the end of this year. To provide extensive information about the country to the Chinese people, we're going to improve our (tourism) Web site's Chinese version," Kasit said.

Each tourist will automatically receive travel insurance equivalent to 68,000 yuan through December 31. If tourists get hurt during local political demonstrations or riots, their medical bill and hospitalization costs can be offset by the insurance. The same holds true for their lodging, dining and transportation expenses in case they get stranded in the country due to airport closure.

The seaside destination Pattaya will hold a series of tourism promotion and marketing campaigns from this month until August, including giving each tourist a voucher worth 1,000 baht (200 yuan). About 33 local hotels will participate in the campaign by offering discounts to guests.

Many Chinese travelers, however, still worry about Thailand's precarious political situation.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit in Pattaya in April was cancelled at the last minute and leaders were evacuated after demonstrators loyal to former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra stormed the venue.

Kasit said security measures have been mapped out to prevent a recurrence of that incident and to safeguard tourists. "I can guarantee the safety of Thailand," he said.

Tourism constitutes a huge part of Thailand's gross domestic product, but the industry has suffered back-to-back blows from its domestic political turbulence, the global financial crisis, and now, the swine flu.

It is estimated that the number of visitors to the country has dropped 20 percent this year.

Correction

A photograph for a May 22 article titled "UN marks AIDS memorial in 798 Art District" identified Subinay Nandy, country director of UNDP China, as the official lighting a candle during the event. It should have been Khalid Malik, UNDP China representative.

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Summer ski race heats up elite players in Inner Mongolia



Norway's Trond Iversen claimed the title in the men's event, followed by Sweden's Adam Johansson.

Xinhua Photo

By Huang Daohen

Skiing in summer sounds implausible but it can be done: snow is gathered in winter and kept in a special container till the hot season comes. The Summer Ski Sprint Tour 2009, on its third year, saw the world's top skiers go head-to-head in Inner Mongolia last week.

Around 50 of the best European skiers and 30 of the best Chinese skiers participated in this year's 1,200-meter race held in the cities of Aershan

and Yakeshi.

This was a good year for north European skiers: Norway's Trond Iversen claimed the title in the men's event, followed by Sweden's Adam Johansson and Finland's Lasse Paakkonen.

Maiken Falla, 19, from Finland, took the women's top spot, while China's Man Dandan placed second and Finland's Mirva Rintala placed third.

The meet also saw Bjorn Lind, a double Olympic champion in Turin and last year's winner, fight

for medals in the competition, where skiers earn points from the International Skiing Federation.

Lind, who was in poor shape, fell behind Finland's Lasse Paakkonen and finished fourth in the final. But the 31-year-old Swedish skiing legend said he still enjoyed the competition. "It's a wonderful trip. The grassland is beautiful and helped all the players relax while they enjoyed their victories," he said.

When asked about tips for beginners, Lind said rookie skiers

should first learn to have fun. "It's the most important advice I can give," he said. "If you have fun on skis, then you'll develop the drive to learn more about the technical aspects of the sport," he said.

The ski tour, jointly sponsored by the China Skiing Association and Sweden company Nordic Ways, was split into two phases. Each consisted of a 1,200-meter sprint in which winners went on to a qualifying race, then a quarterfinal, a semi-final and finally, the championship.

Three-finger salute supports battle against climate change

By Venus Lee

Not all finger salutes are made equal, a social club showed on Wednesday.

Dubbed Peace + One, the activity that evening encouraged people to take photos of three-finger salutes, which will then be sent to participants of the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen in December.

Philip McMaster, organizer of the activity held in a cafe near Wudaokou, said his club Peace + One is also involving local universities in the campaign. "Leading up to the climate change talks in Copenhagen, thousands of three-finger photos will be displayed as a request to leaders and negotiators who will assemble in Copenhagen to 'seal the deal' whatever it takes, even if it means developed nations giving up their privileges and sharing their resources," he said.

The three fingers signify economy, society and environment, McMaster said, holding up three fingers. "They are the major fac-



Participants raising three fingers to signify their battle against climate change

Photo provided by Peace+One

tors in sustainability. Balance and harmony among them are crucial; they do not only concern the money you earn, but your family's welfare, your living environment and your quality of life," he said.

"It's fun, it's visual and we're confident it will have a profound effect in helping common people set our world on the right track."

McMaster, a Canadian MBA teacher, came to the country two years ago to promote sustainable development based on his "three-finger principle." He wanted to get regular people involved in meeting science's most important challenge, and thus came up with the three-finger salute photo project.

"We do things in a fun way, so that people associate the sustainability lifestyle with positive, pleasant experiences, and will work harder to make decisions that are good for society, the environment and the economy," McMaster said. "The rewards are a happier society, a healthier environment and a stronger economy."

"The activity has created an opportunity to raise awareness of environmental protection in an interesting way and to encourage us to live in a sustainable and responsible way," Hou Jing, 22, a student from Peking University, said.

"I'm delighted to join hands with the team in organizing such an interesting and thought-provoking activity since we see climate change as one of the greatest environmental issues facing us and future generations. Everyone has to play a part to combat this global challenge," Xu Dandan, 24, a postgraduate student from Tsinghua University, said.

McMaster is optimistic about

Event

Workshop: Build Your Own Web site

The first half of the course will introduce basic HTML concepts, while the second half will give participants an opportunity to put theory into practice by working on their own project. Lessons include helping students install necessary software, register a domain name, set up a Web site host and upload initial files to their site. By the end of the course, each participant will have built his own Web site.

The course is useful to people who send out HTML newsletters or those interested in improving or creating their own Web site. It is designed for people with little or no experience with HTML.

Where: 1 Jiudaowan Hutong, Dongzhimen (Near Exit C of Beixinqiao stop on Subway Line5), Dongcheng district

When: Jun 17 to 24, every Wednesday and Thursday, 9:30-11:30 am

Tel: 13520759442

Cost: 1,200 yuan per person

Meandering Mandarin Workshops

The China Culture Center (CCC) in January launched a language program called Meandering Mandarin, designed for foreigners who are new to the capital and are eager to use the Chinese language to cope with daily living and more effectively conduct business with locals.

Students, in groups of 3 to 5, focus on how to deal with real-life situations. They will spend two hours in class learning key words, simple and complex phrases and some cultural information. They will then spend an hour and a half outside the classroom practicing what they've learned and solving problems with the teacher's help.

The course covers eight situations, including "shopping in a market," "going to the tailor" and "eating out." CCC will provide course materials that students can refer to during and after class.

Where: China Culture Center, Kent Center, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Anjialou, Chaoyang District

When: June 18 to 25, every Thursday, 9 am - 12:30 pm

Tel: 6432 9341

Cost: 1,200 yuan

(By Chen Zao)

Peace + One's potential to become a global symbol, especially if China's vast population adopts it. McMaster said he designed the three-finger salute with the hope of uniting people, akin to the two-finger peace symbol popular among anti-war activists during the 1960s.

"Peace + One means that if we want peace in the world, we must act as one, care as one, protect as one and be one. People should internalize the concept of being a world citizen," he said.

So far, McMaster's group has collected 3,000 pictures through their Web sites peaceplusone.cn and sustainabilitysymbol.com, and McMaster hopes more people will get involved.



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Lukas Birk

By Venus Lee

Kafkanistan may sound like a Central Asian country, but you will not find it on an exhibition which explores the world of present-day travel and tourism to Afghanistan that world based on actual happenings.

The country's "passport" has a warning just under the cover: Kafkanistan is a country where you will be held responsible for any mental harm or damages. Tourists entering Kafkanistan must declare any inappropriate clothes as well as firearms and weapons. Please declare any inappropriate clothes as well as firearms and weapons and misconceptions. Please declare any inappropriate clothes as well as firearms and weapons.

Only Kafkanistan citizens Smiley Whalla and Kartun Whalla can unveil the mystery of the country. Only Kafkanistan citizens Smiley Whalla and Kartun Whalla can unveil the mystery of the country.

Journey to Kafkanistan Land of stories



Photos provided by Lukas Birk

Birth of Kafkanistan

The birth of Kafkanistan and the characters began with an email in spring 2005, when Foley asked Birk to join his project in exploring the world of tourism in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.

Foley is an anthropologist with an interest in tourism, tourist phenomenon, how and why tourists go to certain places and how to interact with them. He conducted considerable anthropological research over the last three years, and finished two MA degrees on the project.

Birk, an artist, presents the project from his own angle. "We are all influenced by the media. Lots of us will never go to the place, and all we know about it is what we read in newspapers and what we see on TV, so I am very interested in people's perceptions based on the media," he says.

The two met in India in 2001, the year the US military launched its campaign in the region claiming to fight terrorism. They kept in touch with each other after they left, and met again in 2005 in Pakistan to start their research.

Since they not only explored a world but created another – Kafkanistan – they are the first citizens to show their videos of interviews with tourists to the three countries.

Rumors swept through the places

The duo visited Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan several times from 2005 to 2007. Various rumors and stories accompanied them during their trips.

When they were traveling in Pakistan and before going to Afghanistan in 2005, they heard of a story about an American prostitute several times. People said the woman came to do business in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, where there were many US soldiers who wanted to hire sex workers.

The rumor collapsed when they went to Kabul with other tourists and met the woman. "People don't know reality. They see something and fabricate a story according to their logical reasoning, and gossip spreads it," Birk said. "The story goes that she was a foreigner and she wears make-up and no veil, so she must be an American. Actually she is neither a prostitute nor an American. She is a Canadian make-up artist." "Miss Canada" tells the story of this experience.

"What tourists knew about Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran was mainly based on news, rumors and stories from books," Birk said. "The whole world is full of clouds and fiction. That's why we called the project Kafkanistan, like Austrian novelist Franz Kafka's novel *The Castle*, in which Kafka writes about how people

don't act. Everything is on rumors and what

Journey to Kafkanistan

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Sean Foley

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pay off the factory people and the
because it is illegal to go in. Only then
safe in that area, though you could
up kidnapped or whatever. You are
a place where you don't know what
pen," the artist says.

ough local people are friendly, open
pitable, the two sensed an undercur-
acial hatred that has grown since the
sion. "If they see a white man, they
he is an American," he says.

past 40 years have brought nothing
to the country. "In Afghanistan, the
ny age, all they know is war: the Rus-
sion in 1979 and the US invasion in
well as the Taliban's rule," he says.
ough many foreigners go there
help the locals, the artist says the
ple he talked to could not see where
id was going.

y don't feel like they are being built
ey see are big jeeps, big wounds
orce and foreigners' insincerity," he

said. "They don't feel like there is much help
coming from foreigners, and they don't trust
them: especially white people."

Collecting stories

Without the security of a safeguard or
gunman, Foley and Birk traveled as indi-
vidual tourists. They wore long, full beards
and dressed like Afghans. Birk dyed his
brown beard dark to make himself closer
to his Kafkanistani character. They trav-
eled with other individual tourists to
understand what they were doing and col-
lect their experiences and feelings.

In Lahore, they met a Vietnamese tourist
who went there to explore how the people
outside his country are living and how they
feel about themselves, about the world and
about Vietnam. Unfortunately, he lost every-
thing he had. The locals took care of him and
gave him everything, saying they were like
long lost brothers, because he is Vietnamese.
Like the Afghans, he came from a country
that was brutally invaded by the US military.

"He said he found God in Afghanistan:
not God in God, but God in people. People
there are so kind to each other. This is what
it means to be human. I am in need and you
help me. For him, that's the highest level of
humanity," the artist says.

The man told Foley and Birk that
although he did not share the Afghan culture
and came from a distant country, they could
sense each other's hearts. He never before
realized that true happiness is from some-
where inside: somewhere indescribable and
unexplainable, but still there nevertheless.

He said the differences between all
people are few, and where they exist
they can be overcome by mutual good
will. "He told me that the greatest threat
to the human race is selfishness, not
international terrorism or limited natural
resources," Birk says.

All the people Foley and Birk inter-
viewed and talked to had specific reasons
for going to Afghanistan. "We found tour-
ists going to war zones, gun factories and
landmine fields to see the country in com-
plete destruction, which fascinated us. This
is why we started our project: we did what
they did and got along with them to collect
their stories," he says.

Although the project is laced with com-
mentary on politics and war, Birk says the
intent was never political. "The project is all
about the tourists' story – about the world
that people never know. Actually, it is not
about Afghanistan, it is about the tourists
who went to Afghanistan."



1, 5, 6. Darulaman, Palace in Kabul
2, 4. Dara, where tourists go to see
the gun factory.
3. Let's go to to Kabul, the Khyber
pass connects Pakistan with
Afghanistan.

Kafkanistan – Tourism to Afghanistan

Address: Anniart, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
Date: June 20 – July 18, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm
Phone: 8456 7783

Making and remaking an avant-garde architect

By Charles Zhu

When MIT opened in 2004 its Ray and Maria Stata Center, a building like several colorful boxes casually thrown together, it won the praise of architects and brought fame to modernist designer Frank Gehry.

Barbara Isenber, a Los Angeles-based writer covering the arts, goes deeper with her *Conversations with Frank Gehry* (290pp, Alfred A. Knopf, US \$40) for a more penetrating insight into the life and work of the greatest American master since Frank Lloyd Wright.

Gehry who turned 80 in February was born a Goldberg and spent his childhood in a Toronto working-class Jewish community. As a child, he showed great interest in building things and first constructed his imagined houses with wooden blocks on the floor of his grandmother's kitchen.

When he was 18, the Goldbergs moved to Los Angeles and he found a congenial environment there for an inquisitive and creative mind. The city was open to new ideas and accommodating to new forms of architecture, as rebellious as an unconformist to the mainstream architectural culture in the eastern seaboard of America.

Gehry studied at the University of Southern California, home of

a top-notch architecture program that emphasized Californian models instead of the prevalent European ones. The architect got his baptism in American pop culture in the multi-ethnic city; it was a moment that inspired him to explore new architectural forms.

He was extensively influenced by Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright, and learned from the works of Michelangelo, Rembrandt and Rauschenberg. Among his best known architectures as an experimental art form are the Guggenheim Bilbao and the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

Gehry was often asked about why he has adopted his current surname. He was obviously not happy with such a question and countered that Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn also assumed new surnames, and asked, "Why are people so interested in the name change?"

Gehry made an extraordinary success with his experimental art form at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in 1997 and it turned out that his former modesty was not true. He was as terribly ambitious as anyone, and admitted that it was just a pose.

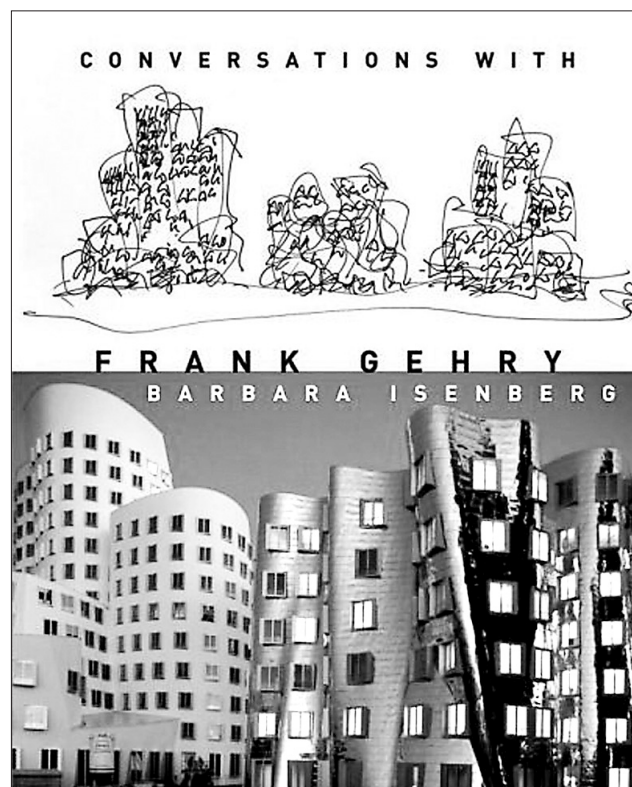
"Architects in New York ... were kind of attracted to me as long as I was subordinate to them. As soon as I came out with work that

got attention, there was kind of a backlash ... They think I'm an 'aw shucks' guy and then I turn out to be every bit as ambitious as they are," he said.

Gehry traveled a long and tortuous road before he arrived at the pinnacle of architectural fame. Starting in 1965, he did a series of jobs for America's best known postwar commercial builder, James Rouse. But the architect believed he would never be able to develop his own interest in art as a hired hand, and determinedly left that lucrative job.

With his avant-garde approach baffling the establishment patrons, Gehry lost a commission for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles to Japanese architect Arata Isozaki and met with another humiliating rejection when a new theater for the Los Angeles Philharmonic was announced in the late 1980s. Gehry had a nightmare that evening where Dorothy Chandler, a Los Angeles philanthropist, turned down the offer to him saying, "I don't like his work. He will not be considered to design a concert hall."

Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall sits triumphantly across the street from the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, as if scoffing at Chandler's bandbox and her short-sightedness.



Remembering the last century's greatest poets

By He Jianwei

"Debasement is the password of the base; nobility the epitaph of the noble."

Bei Dao is one of the pioneer misty poets, a late 1970s poetry movement influenced by contemporary Western modernists and imagists.

During his two decades abroad, Bei Dao has become friends with some of the greatest poets of the 20th century, including Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Susan Sontag, Octavio Paz and Tomas Tranströmer. This March, Jiangsu Art and Literature Press published *Blue House* (183pp, 18 yuan), a collection of Bei Dao's essays recalling those poets.

The most attractive essay is the story of legendary American poet Allen Ginsberg, best known for *Howl*, a poem celebrating his friends in the Beat Generation and attacking the destructive forces of materialism and conformity.

In Bei Dao's eyes, Ginsberg was a poet clad in secondhand clothes but composing first class poems.

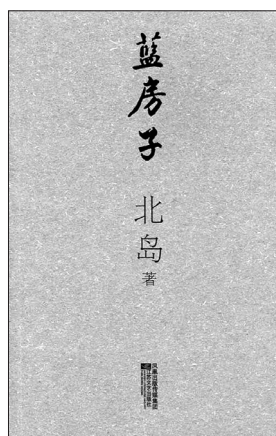
He recalls one time when Ginsberg quarreled with a politician in Seoul after a seminar. When other people wanted to have their picture taken with Ginsberg, he always invited Bei Dao. As one politician pushed Bei Dao out of the view, Ginsberg shouted at him, "He is my good friend, a Chinese poet."

Ginsberg also taught Bei Dao photography. "Idiot cameras make people idiots," he said, and told Bei Dao never to use a flash.

In this book, the author not only explores his relationship with those poets, but also sketches the more personal and sometimes seemingly banal episodes of living in isolation in a foreign country.

The book's name is from Swedish poet Tomas Tranströmer's house, which is on a small island near Stockholm. "The house is old and small, and depends upon constant renovation and painting to withstand the grim Swedish winter," Bei Dao writes.

In a letter dated 1983, Goran Malmqvist, a Swedish linguist, sinologist



and translator, gave Bei Dao the English version of Tranströmer's latest poems and asked if he would like to translate them into Chinese.

It was the first time Bei Dao of Tranströmer. The mysterious but glorious atmosphere the poems created fascinated him, and inspired him to become Tranströmer's first translator in China.

Bei Dao met the Swedish poet two years later in Beijing. He saw the "blue house" when he visited Sweden in the summer of 1985.

Summer is his sweetest memory of Tranströmer and his family. Bei Dao was dazzled by the Swede's creations. The happy hours he spent chatting with friends at the blue house were like Sweden's summer of "boundless sunshine," Bei Dao says.

Bookworm book listing

Vivian Wang from the Bookworm recommends the following best sellers to *Beijing Today* readers.

Zen Baggage: A Pilgrimage to China

By Bill Porter, 352pp, Counterpoint, US \$26

In the spring of 2006, Bill Porter traveled through the heart of the country, from Beijing to Hong Kong, on a pilgrimage to sites associated with the first six patriarchs of Zen. The book is an account of that journey. He weaves together historical background, interviews with Zen masters and translations of its earliest records, along with personal vignettes.



Repeat After Me: A Novel

By Rachel DeWoskin, 320pp, Overlook, US \$23.95

Aysha is a 22-year-old New Yorker piecing her life back together after her parents' divorce and her own nervous breakdown when a young Chinese student Da Ge turns her world upside-down. The book gives readers an alternately funny and painful glimpse of life and loss between languages.



Tales of Old Peking

By Derek Sandhaus, 182pp, China Economic Review Publishing, US \$19.99

The capital has always been viewed as one of the world's most mysterious cities. It was a city forbidden to Westerners for hundreds of years, but its role as the capital of the world's greatest empire made it the focus of enormous curiosity since the days of Marco Polo in the 13th century. This book recreates a sense of old Beijing through a pastiche of historical snippets stories, quotations, cartoons, postcards and drawings.

(By He Jianwei)



Get a fix on the latest customized bikes

By David Drakeford

In a city with an estimated 9 million bicycles, it is hardly surprising that one of Beijing's fastest growing street trends is riding fixed-gear bikes. You may have noticed these lightweight, customized and often colorful models weaving through traffic at high speeds or used for trick-riding in the same spots skateboarders tend to gather.

Fixed gears are as old as the bicycle itself. When the rear wheel of a fixed-gear bike moves, the pedals do too. In other words there is no freewheeling or coasting on a fixed – you have to pedal constantly while moving, and stop pedaling to halt the bike.



It is this simplicity of design and riding style that “fixies” crave. The word “purity” often crops up when talking to enthusiasts and the idea of being “at one with the road.” No shops in Beijing sell ready-made fixeds, so most of the bikes are custom-made by their owners using a normal frame and imported parts. No two bikes are the same – a uniqueness that is a big part of the attraction in this age of rising individuality.

Jason Chang may be the first Chinese-born fixed-gear rider in Beijing. He discovered the “ultra-cool” type of personal transport while studying at University College London, where fixed gears are wildly popular. As a student of fashion he was originally attracted by the unique style of the bikes, but he also considers fixed-gear riding an extreme sport that offers thrills and spills. “A lot of people get into [riding a fixed-gear bike] because it’s like a BMX, but bigger,” he says.

Trick-riding is popular on fixeds, thanks to their light weight and a design that makes stunts such as riding backwards possible. Though he started riding just three months ago, Wang Xiaowei is said to be one of the best Chinese trick-riders in Beijing. “I

saw some Japanese riders on the Internet and thought it looked fun,” he says. Like a number of the riders in China, he was into skiing and snowboarding before taking up this new hobby “for the excitement of it.”

Another common thread binding together the Beijing Fixed Gear Crew, a loosely connected group of riders that has grown from five members a year ago to 50, is that many of them work in fashion and design and were initially attracted to the bikes for their retro appearance.

Canadian-born Jack Lee owns one of the more expensive models, with a price tag somewhere over the 20,000 yuan mark. His favorite part is a hand-crafted leather saddle made in England by Brooks, a company that has been making traditional bicycle saddles for more than 100 years. The front wheel is a racing-style carbon-fiber model made in the US with a metal rim added for a brake. “I have one brake on the front, but about 70 percent of the riders here don’t,” Lee says. His pedals are decked out with double straps to secure his feet, an important feature on a fixed-gear bike.

All his tinkering has cost a lot of time and money, “But that’s the fun of it,” he says.

Getting a fixed-gear bike in Beijing without the hassle is about to get easier. The capital’s newest answer to gentrified Nanluoguxiang is Wudaoying Hutong, a winding alleyway just west of the Lama Temple that is experiencing a breakneck surge of renovation. Soon-to-open Natooke is a small shop that will supply parts and customizations for fixed-gear bikes. German-born owner and trick-rider Ines Brunn loves biking and worked hard to open the store to end the need to build fixed-gear bikes from custom imports.

Aside from her impressive cycling performances, Brunn says her favorite way to ride a fixed-gear bike in Beijing is long distance from the city center to its eastern outskirts on a butt-numbing 70 to 80 kilometer circuit. The constant turning of the wheels and pedals in perfect harmony is conducive to a state she describes as “meditative.”

However you spin it, there’s a certain, almost indefinable charm to the riding experience. “I was hesitant to try a fixed-gear bike at first,” says Jack Lee, hinting at the rather perverse idea of a bike with no gears or brakes. “But once you start riding there’s no turning back.”



1,2 Two teams from Beijing and Shanghai compete on a bike polo court.

3. Beijing Fixed Gear Crew races through the capital’s hutong.

4. An arrow head wheel

Photos by Alexis Finch

Tips

Visit: natooke.com

Soon to be Beijing’s first shop specializing in fixed-gear bikes.

Search for: “Puma fixed gear 101”

The definitive, free e-book for customizing your own fixed-gear bike.

Wear: a messenger bag, cycling cap and pants rolled down way, way up.



Extreme shopping

Shops for skateboard, BMX and roller skate fanatics

Roller-skating base

Compared with skateboarding and biking, roller skating has had more success penetrating the mainstream and has had government support for years. Tornado was opened by a sporting club of the same name in 2002, and has since built seven branches in town – along with its own indoor rink. Its Chaoyangmen store is the biggest and offers skaters endless choices.

The shop sells famous roller skate brands, including Razor, USD, Valo and Xsjado, as well as accessories such as wheels, bearings and protectors. Tornado has also created its own line of bags and T-shirts, and gives loyal customers discounts on certain products.

The sporting club regularly organizes skates and competitions, which brings together fans from various parts of the city.

Tornado

Where: 2E-236 to 2E-238, Chaowaimen Building, 26 Chaoyangmen Wai Nanjie, Chaoyang District

Tel: 8658 7775

Open: 10 am – 7 pm

Web site: ttb3.com

Photo provided by Tornado



Skaters' playground

Tour Skate, which started its business online 10 years ago, is the most reputable gear shop within skateboarding circles. The store, owned by long-time skater Baozi, also serves as a gathering place for local and expat skateboard lovers alike.

The shop at Jiaodaokou is not huge, but it contains everything related to skateboard culture – from skateboard parts to documentaries of the sport. The bookshelf right beside the door is filled with Baozi's collection of foreign skateboard magazines. Clothes such as T-shirts, hooded sweaters and shorts hang opposite a display of boards and street fashion shoes.

The colorful graffiti patterns on the store walls and on the skateboards create an atmosphere that reminds customers this is an imported subculture.

Xiaolong, one of the store's staff and Baozi's friend, said they are focused on serving local skaters even if the monetary returns aren't substantial. "What others do to earn a lot of money, we do because this is what we love and what we're really good at," he said.

Half of Tour Skate's boards are domestically made, including Shehui, a Beijing brand created by graffiti artist Li Quiu 10 years ago. "They made 100 boards at first as gifts. To their surprise, they receive good comments, so they decided to start the business," Xiaolong said.

A Shehui board, with its variety of patterns (320 yuan), has become popular even among expat skaters. "The boards are well-made, and the brand represents the local street culture, which is attractive to foreigners," Xiaolong said. Shehui T-shirts, wallets and other accessories are also sold at the shop.

But a serious skateboarder will need more than these. To match different skating surfaces, Tour Skate supplies wheels for brands including Dark Star (280 yuan), Spitfire (240 yuan) and Trace (220 yuan). For trucks, the shop recommends regular models made by Independent (285 yuan).

With all their equipment and gear taken care of, fans can then head for the city's hot skating spots: Black bank at Dawanglu and The Olympic Village.

Tour Skate Shop

Where: 41-3, Jiaodaokou Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

Tel: 6407 1069

Open: 10 am – 7 pm

Web site:

3xchina.com



BMX bikes and more

Beijing has long winters that limit riders' training opportunities, and we do not have an indoor venue yet," Tan said.

Among Chinese riders, only two have skills on the professional level, which can allow them to participate in X-Games and earn a living from the sport.

"We need to improve the sport and encourage more young people to join," Tan said. "After the Olympic Games, things started to change because the sport was one of the events that attracted many viewers. Teenagers began to be more interested in it."

Most beginners buy assembled bikes then slowly customize their ride. Australian-made Colony, one of the shop's newest merchandise, makes lightweight frames (3,800 yuan). "This brand is of high quality and popular among new groups that are after lighter parts to improve their performance," Tan said.

Also available at Red Party are larger and heavier frames, such as Demolition (2,800 yuan), which older biker love.

Red Party

Where: 307A Beijing Shangjie Building, 56 Dongxinglong Jie, Chongwen District

Tel: 13146969204

Open: 10 am – 7 pm

Web site: shop33166191.taobao.com/

Red Party bicycle shop serves as a local agent for a variety of big foreign brands. "Most of the domestically manufactured bikes are not designed for professional moves. The sport, after all, is quite dangerous, so we have to put quality at the top of the list," Mandy Tan, the shop's manager, said.

The store, owned by Christ Hung, started out in Hong Kong, moved to Guangzhou, then put down roots in Beijing eight years ago. It is located in an office building in Chongwenmen and resembles a small warehouse.

Like other professional sporting gear, an ideal BMX bike is customized – all its parts specially chosen by its rider for maximum performance. Dozens of bicycle frame models of different brands hang on the store's wall, alongside handlebars, seats and wheels.

Beijing has only a little more than 30 expert riders; the country has about a hundred. "The sport has developed comparatively well in Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shanghai.



Photos by Song Nannan

Outdoor dining on the cheap



Nali Patio has a nice garden.
Photo by Zhao Jinwei

By Annie Wei

The heat in summer may become oppressive, but it is also the best season to relish the outdoors. Dining places that have a terrace can capitalize on this good fortune. They can offer customers a place to savor their food while enjoying the summer breeze and the city scene below.

Beijing Today surveyed such restaurants in Sanlitun and the neighboring Workers' Stadium, undeniably the default playground for university students, yuppies and expats. But we specifically looked for affordable eating places that had outdoor tables, because pleasure does not have to be pricey.



Savory crepe

Crêpanini



Dessert crepe



Photos by Zhao Jinwei

Crepe kingdom

Crepanini, as its name suggests, specializes in crepes, small very thin pancakes of French origin. The restaurant, which has a big open window and a couple of white chairs and tables under the shade of a tree, has been open for only a week but has already become popular among Sanlitun patrons.

Because of its shady tables, a noontime meal here is just as leisurely as one in the evening. Crepanini's menu is simple and consists of crepes, paninis or Italian sandwiches, desserts and beverages. Its crepes are mouth-watering and its fruit juices (25 yuan) are freshly made. Its waiters and waitresses are dressed in striped sailor's shirts: very French indeed.

Its savory crepes cost between 25 and 32 yuan and its sweet crepes between 12 and 25 yuan, depending on the filling. Paninis are from 26 to 33 yuan; waffles from 15 to 28 yuan (additional whipped cream is 3 yuan); desserts such as chocolate cake and apple crumble cost 20 yuan, ice cream sundae 12 yuan and vanilla ice cream 6 yuan. Their wines are around 28 yuan a glass.

Crepanini

Where: 1/F Nali Patio, 81 Sanlitun Bei Lu, Chaoyang District
When: lunch and dinner hours til late
Cost: Starting from 20 yuan

Healthy, eco-friendly drinks

This place offers guilt-free fruit juices, smoothies and sandwiches. Eden Juice Bar takes pride in its fresh, healthy ingredients as well as its environmentally friendly biodegradable containers.

Each drink has an appealing Chinese name, which tickles Chinese customers. Eden used to merely be a take-away place because of its cramped space; in this warm weather, the management placed seven tables outdoor, where exhausted shoppers can catch their breath over a glass of juice.

The service here on weekend afternoons, however, is quite slow due to a lack of service staff. There is only one person who takes the orders and one who prepares the drinks.

Eden's mango juice is pure tropical bliss. A large glass costs 38 yuan, but customers who are avoiding carbohydrates should opt for the medium-sized glass at 32 yuan. Unlike other juice bars that try to save on cost by mixing water with fruit juice, this place uses pure fresh juice. Its mixed berry juice, for instance, consists of apple juice and juice from different types of berries.

Some people who live nearby come for a breakfast of fresh juice and a sandwich, which costs around 45 yuan.

Eden Juice Bar

Where: 1/F Nali Patio, 81 Sanlitun Bei Lu, Chaoyang District
Open: 8:30 am – 10:30 pm
Tel: 5208 6086
Cost: Starting from 25 yuan

Grilled delights



Outside Wangsheng beef noodle restaurant
Photo by Yu Tingmei

This modest eatery opposite the north gate of the Workers' Stadium has become a hot dinner spot. It attracts Beijingers, expats and migrant workers alike.

It is popular for its Xinjiang cuisine and after-hours service. Its lamb kebabs are well-grilled yet tender. Its traditional Xinjiang chicken or lamb with tomato and peppers at 48 yuan is a good deal with heaps of meat.

It offers home deliveries around the area for orders of at least 50 yuan. Service ends at 10 pm, so listen to your stomach and watch the clock.

Wangsheng Niurou Lamian

Where: 19 Gongti Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am to early morning
Tel: 13240456336
Cost: Starting from 15 yuan



The Mughal's
Photos by Zhao Jinwei

Pakistani thirst-quenchers

The Mughal's, the only Pakistani restaurant in town, has a small cafe on its building's first floor, beside some clothing boutiques and snack shops.

The cafe, whose decoration is still a work in progress, offers home-made Pakistani drinks. Izha Bhatti, the manager, boasts of their house special: lassi, a frothy blend of yogurt, water, salt and spices. Their lassi come in eight flavors, including salty, strawberry, almond and pistachio, priced from 25 to 30 yuan.

"You can find sweet lassi in other restaurants, but you can't find the other flavors except here," Bhatti said.

The cafe has only three tables outside, but customers can sit with their drinks next door – at the terrace of a fashion shop.

The Mughal's Cafe

Where: 1/F Nali Patio, 81 Sanlitun Bei Lu, Chaoyang District
When: 10 am – 10 pm
Tel: 5208 6082
Cost: Starting from 20 yuan

Return of the noisy melody-makers



6 Saturday, June 20

Exhibition

Blue Noses – New video boxes

This group exhibit showcases “Blue Noses,” a style which follows new trends in Russian modern art – communicativeness and humor.

Where: Art Issue Projects, 1 Beigao, Cuigezhuang Village, Chaoyang District

When: Until July 31, daily except

Monday, 11 am – 7:30 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6434 0266



The Remained Charm of Old Custom – Excellent Art Work Exhibition of Mask and Puppet

Where: National Art Museum Of China, 1

Wusi Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Until June 24, daily, 9 am – 5 pm

Admission: 20 yuan

Tel: 6400 6326

Movie

Longji

Where: 5/F Wenjin Hotel, Tsinghua Science Park, Haidian District

When: 4:30 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6252 5566

Nightlife

Long Shen Dao Summer Reggae Party

Where: MAO Live House, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm

Admission: 60 yuan

Tel: 6402 5080

PIN Summer Electronic Music Party

Where: Fengzheng Dajie, Jianwai SOHO, 39 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 1:30 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6567 8888

By Wang Yu

There are few bands in the local music scene that become stars within four years after their first jam session. One of them is Carsick Cars, whose European gigs immediately put it in a different league.

Next Friday, the band, whose lineup consists of Zhang Zhouwang, Li Qing and Li Weisi, will be back in Beijing to promote their latest album, “You can listen, you can talk.”

The concert at Yugongyishan is the last stop in Carsick Cars’ tour with The Gar, which will also celebrate the release of the group’s second record. Traveling by bus, the two bands have played in sixteen cities around the country and took audiences by storm with their new pieces.

Zhang, Carsick’s lead singer and guitarist, said he has been happy on the road, but that he has also encountered dozens of crazy experiences.

Li Qing, the group’s drummer, said, “It’s been really draining for all of us. We’ve been exhausted after the last few shows.”

But Zhang, who performed solo twice in New York City, said he’s still counting on having enough energy to make the typical “noise” expected of the band in Beijing.

With easy drum loops and reversing fuzzy guitar sound controlled by phasers, Carsick has learned a lot from its hero Sonic Youth and does not mind being labeled an imitator. “Every band starts by learning from its idols and these three musicians have already grown into their

own styles,” said Wharton Tiers, an album producer for Sonic Youth who undertook the same role for “You can listen, you can talk.”

Compared with the cynical songs that Zhang wrote at age 19 for the band’s first record, Carsick’s new pieces show more maturity in their lyrics and melody. The problems of living in a metropolis is one of the album’s themes, along with some of Zhang’s more spontaneous outpourings of emotion.

“Everyone holds a unique understanding of your songs, just like the title ‘You can listen, you can talk,’ which can be used to describe a lot of things that happen in your life,” Zhang said.

Zhang admitted that the group’s attitude toward music has changed. As three new punks four years ago, they cared about nothing but self-expression; now, as one of the hottest acts in the local music scene, they need to constantly think about innovation. The band members incorporated new instruments in their recordings. It is now up to their listeners to judge their growth as musicians.

Carsick Cars: You can listen, you can talk

Where: Yugongyishan, 3-2, Zhangzizhong

Lu, Dongcheng District

When: June 26, 9-12 pm

Admission: 80 yuan

Tel: 6404 2711

Friday, June 19

Exhibition

Creato Who Lane

Where: First Sound Gallery, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until July 10, daily except

Monday, 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 5978 9888

Transcending New Concreteness

– Mao Xuhui Solo Exhibition

Where: Gallery Artside, Space I, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until July 31, daily except

Monday, 10 am – 7 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 5978 9192

Movie

Over Her Dead Body

Where: Haojing Plaza, 108 Zhichun Lu, Haidian District

When: 6 pm

Admission: 45 yuan

Tel: 13911590742

Nightlife

Excess Luggage

Where: Jimmy’s Thai Kitchen & Lounge, 1/F Building B, East Gate Plaza, 32 Dong-

zhong Jie, Dongcheng District

When: 10 pm

Admission: 30 yuan

Tel: 6415 5157



Thanks, Jiaju!

Huang Jiaju, the lead singer of Beyond, one of the most popular bands from Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s, became a legend after his death in an accident in 1993. To commemorate Huang’s contribution to the music industry, an album produced by an indie label will be released.

Where: Weibozhiyan Club, 2308 (3/F) North Building, SOHO Shangdu, 8 Dongdaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 8 pm

Admission: 40 yuan

Tel: 5900 0969

Sunday, June 21

Exhibition

Divinity Chamber – Jeong Jinyong Solo Exhibition

Where: Art Issue Projects, 1 Beigao, Cuigezhuang Village, Cha-

oyang District

When: Until July 31, daily except Monday,

11 am – 7:30 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6434 0266

Fool Effect

Where: Open Realization Contemporary Art Center, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until June 26, daily except Monday,

10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 5978 9152

Movie

The Horsemen

Where: 1905 Movie Club, B2, 6 Xiangjun Bei Li, Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 4 pm

Admission: 15 yuan

Tel: 6591 8189

Nightlife



Wang Zheng – June Times Concert

Where: Star Live, 3/F, 79 Hepingli Xi Jie, Dongcheng District

When: 8 pm

Admission: 100 yuan

Tel: 6425 5677

Make a Feint to the East and Attack in the West

Where: Yugongyishan, 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District

When: 9:30 pm

Admission: 50 yuan

Tel: 6404 2711

Upcoming

Nightlife

Chris Garneau China Tour

Where: National Library of China Concert Hall, 33 Zhongguancun Nan Dajie, Haidian District

When: June 26, 8 pm

Admission: 100-480 yuan

Tel: 13426117374

Stage in July

Concert

Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra

– China Concert

Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District

When: July 2, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-1,280 yuan

Tel: 6605 7006

Bache Cycle

Where: Forbidden City Music Hall (inside Zhongshan Park), Dongcheng District

When: July 17, 7:30 pm

Admission: 30-380 yuan

Tel: 6559 8306

In a Romantic Mood – The Newstead Trio Concert

Where: Concert Hall of The National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang’an Jie, Xicheng District

When: July 17, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-500 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

Beethoven Cycle by

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet

Where: Forbidden City Music Hall (inside Zhongshan Park), Dongcheng District

When: July 24, 7:30 pm

Admission: 30-600 yuan

Tel: 6559 8306

Dance

The Rain of Flowers Along the Silk Road – Dance Drama

Where: Theater of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang’an Jie, Xicheng District

When: July 9-10, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-480 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

Don Quixote –

Spanish Modern Dance

Where: Theater of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang’an Jie, Xicheng District

When: July 29 – August 2, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-480 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

Opera

The 2nd China International Youth Arts Week

– The Marriage of Figaro

Where: Century Theater, 40 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: July 12-14, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-880 yuan

Tel: 6462 8470

Tea – The Heart’s Mirror

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang’an Jie, Xicheng District

When: July 30-31, 7:30 pm

Admission: 180-1,080 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

(By Jackie Zhang)

Coffee?

Yes Please!

A good beverage choice

Coffee's bad reputation may be on its way out. "We are not telling people to drink it for health, but it is a good beverage choice," said Rob van Dam, a coffee researcher and epidemiologist at the Harvard School of Public Health.

It's important to remember coffee and caffeine are vastly different: one can be good for you, and the other, less so. Coffee is a complex beverage with hundreds, if not thousands, of bio-active ingredients. A cup of coffee is 2 percent caffeine and 98 percent other stuff, coffee researcher Terry Graham, chairman of Human Health and Nutritional Sciences at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, said.

Caffeine, whether in coffee, tea, soft drinks or pills, can make you jittery and anxious and, in some people, can trigger insomnia. However, the findings make it reasonably certain that coffee can be healthy:

1. Oxidation: the ingredients of caffeine, caffeic acid and chlorogenic acid in coffee can resist the increase of free radicals, cell-damaging molecules that cause rapid aging and are the triggers of many diseases like cardiomyopathy, arteriosclerosis, stroke, emphysema and Parkinson's disease.

2. Diabetes: 20 studies show that coffee, both regular and decaf, lowers the risk for Type 2 diabetes by as much as 50 percent in some studies. Researchers say that is probably because chlorogenic acid, one of the many ingredients in coffee, slows the uptake of glucose (sugar) from the intestines. Chlorogenic acid may also stimulate GLP-1, a chemical that boosts insulin, the hormone that escorts sugar from the blood into cells. Yet another ingredient, trigonelline, a precursor to vitamin B3, may help slow glucose absorption.

3. Heart disease and stroke: recent studies suggest frequent coffee consumption does not increase the risk of either condition. In fact, coffee might slightly reduce the risk of stroke. A study published in March in the journal *Circulation* looked at data on more than 83,000 women over age 24. Those who drank two to three cups of coffee a day had a 19 percent lower risk of stroke than those who drank almost none. A Finnish study found similar results for men. Highly concentrated polyphenolic compound, a powerful anti-oxidant contained in

coffee, helps retard the oxidation time of low density lipoprotein and prevents blood clots. It can also counter the painful effects of blood vessel dilation in the head. Moderate coffee consumption strengthens the contraction of heart muscle, stimulates blood circulation and reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease.

4. Cancer: research consistently shows a drop in liver cancer and endometrial cancer risk with coffee consumption, and there is some, albeit weaker, evidence that it may lower colon cancer risk as well.

5. Cirrhosis: coffee seems to protect the liver against cirrhosis, especially that caused by alcoholism. It's not clear, either for cancer or cirrhosis, whether it's the coffee or the caffeine that may be protective.

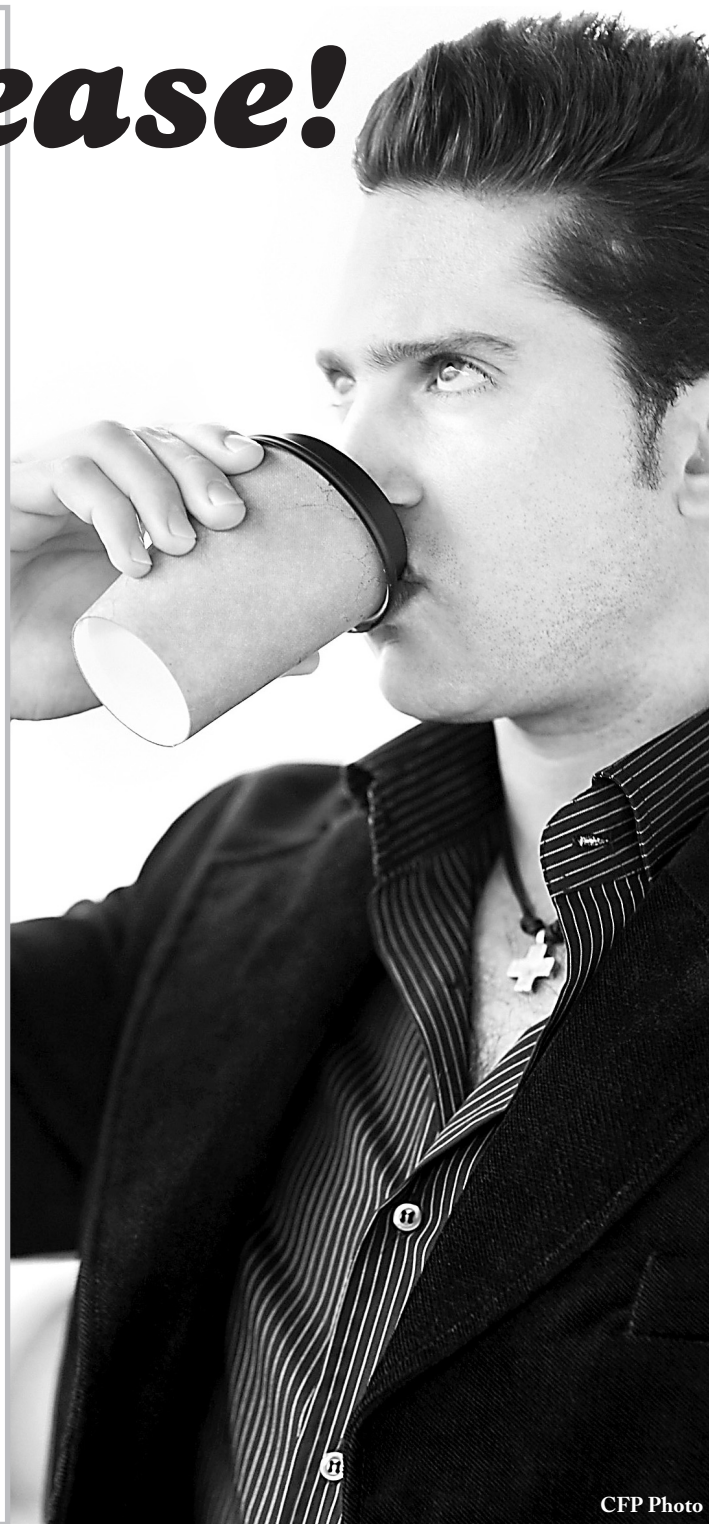
6. Parkinson's disease: with this progressive, neurological illness, it's the caffeine, not coffee, that carries the benefit. No one knows for sure why caffeine keeps Parkinson's at bay. Several studies show that coffee drinkers, men especially, appear to have half the risk of developing Parkinson's disease compared with non-drinkers. Women also see a benefit, but only if they do not take post-menopausal hormones, said Dr. Alberto Ascherio, a professor of epidemiology and nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health. A measurable reduction in risk is seen at 150 milligrams of caffeine a day, the amount in an average cup of coffee.

7. Athletic performance: it's clear that caffeine, not coffee itself, delivers the big boost, said Graham, the researcher from Ontario. In fact, caffeine was once deemed a controlled substance by the International Olympic Committee. Caffeine is a powerful "ergogenic agent," meaning it promotes the ability of muscles to work. Studies show that caffeine boosts performance in both very short and very long athletic events, said Graham. It used to be thought that caffeine worked by stimulating the release of sugar in muscles, but recent research suggests it helps muscles release calcium, allowing muscles to contract with more force. It takes only a medium cup of regular coffee for a 130-pound athlete to see a measurable improvement in performance, Graham said.

By Venus Lee

Coffee, once regarded as a health risk, is turning out to be at least a low-risk drink, if not a health food.

Previously, negative research failed to tease apart the effects of coffee and smoking because so many coffee drinkers were also smokers. The brew can protect against diabetes, liver cancer, cirrhosis and Parkinson's disease according to new research.



CFP Photo

Old caveats not all false

However, some research lauding coffee's health benefits is faulty. Most of the studies were observational; that is, they followed people over time and correlated health outcomes with coffee drinking based on the test subjects' recollections of how much coffee they consumed, Zhao Baolu, a researcher in biophysics at the Chinese Academy of Science, said.

1. Avoid abusing espresso

Many workaholics refresh themselves by jolting their central nervous system with a cup of very dark coffee frequently. "Generally speaking, the concentration (of caffeine) shouldn't exceed 100 milligrams per cup," Zhao said. The high concentration of coffee will cause a sharp increase in adrenaline, rapid heartbeats, high blood pressure and can leave you with the jitters, tinnitus and even tremors.

2. Avoid excessive sugar

Coffee may taste better with a little sugar, but it will knock you out if you add too much. Zhao said coffee drains the body of some miner-

als used to turn carbohydrates into usable glucose, and the overabundance of sugar will make the pancreas produce far more insulin, leading to a blood sugar crash. Do not eat sweet foods while drinking coffee.

3. Avoid over-brewing

The aromatic substance of coffee will evaporate if it is brewed too long, because the steam bubbles that gather on the coffee's surface carry out much of the coffee's substance leaving only the bitterness behind.

4. Avoid smoking, alcohol while drinking coffee

You can exacerbate a hangover with coffee the morning after a night of heavy drinking. Coffee will dilate the blood vessels and accelerate circulation, which throws the brain into an extremely excited state making it more likely to recognize pain.

Drinking coffee while smoking will also cause brain overexcitement, and the caffeine may mutate in the presence of nicotine, actually boosting your chances of developing cancer.

Who should avoid coffee?

Although moderate coffee intake will make many people energetic and improve their efficiency, it is not good for everyone:

1. Pregnant women:

Data are inconclusive on whether or not coffee drinking is connected to miscarriage. It does influence the development of the baby's nervous system and can cause retardation or dementia, and can reduce a baby's muscle tone.

2. People who have high blood pressure:

A sudden, big dose of caffeine may boost blood pressure, heart rate and blood serum level because

caffeine constricts blood vessels, which aggravates the risk of coronary heart disease.

3. Digestive tract ulcers:

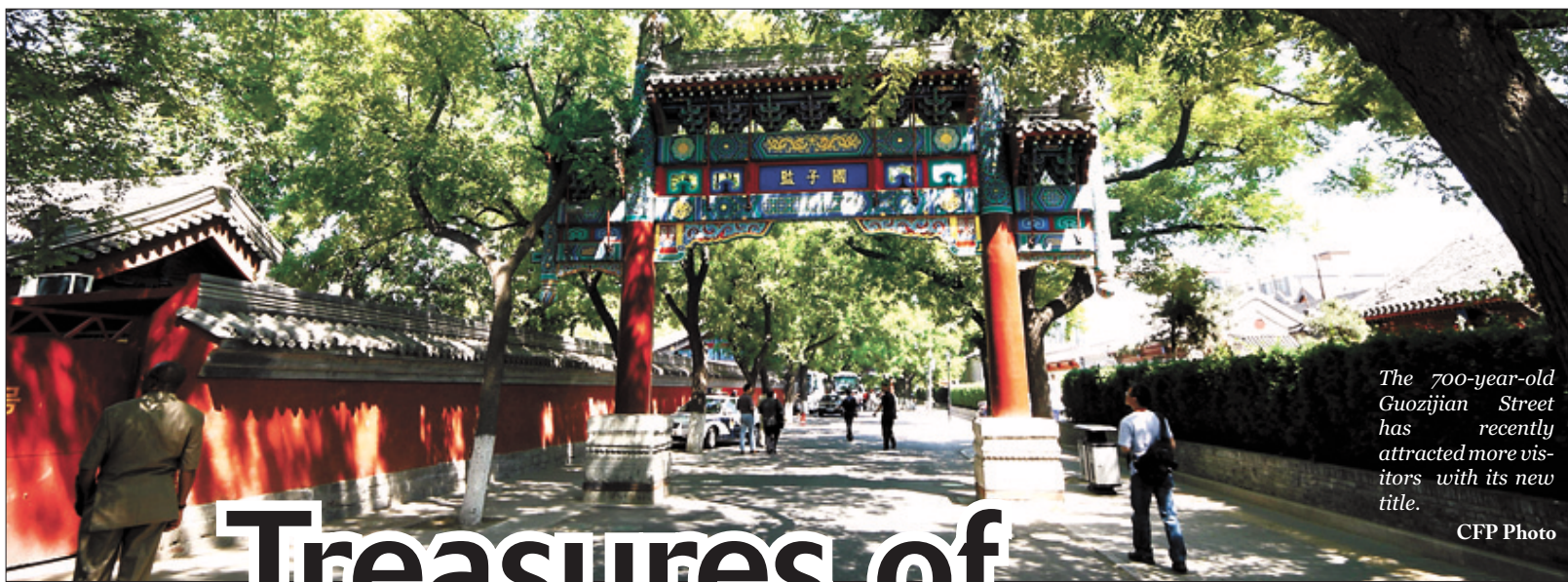
Coffee will cause an increase of gastric acid and aggravate the mucous membranes, slowing recovery.

4. People who have a calcium deficiency:

Coffee can reduce the amount of calcium inside the body and increase the risk of bone loss.

5. People who have insomnia:

Coffee's effect of exciting the central nervous system can aggravate this illness.



The 700-year-old Guozijian Street has recently attracted more visitors with its new title.

CFP Photo

Treasures of Guozijian Street

One of 10 newly proclaimed 'China history and culture streets'

People nowadays visit the Imperial Academy to pray for their children before they take crucial examinations.

CFP Photo



Biyong Hall, the Guozijian's main building, was where Qing emperors gave lectures.

By Zhang Dongya

The government last week named 10 "history and culture streets" following a year-long nationwide selection process. Beijing's seven-century-old Guozijian Street made it into the winner's circle, beating Nanluoguoxiang and Yandaixie Jie.

The street, lined with Chinese scholar trees, contains an Imperial college, a Confucian temple, a private museum, bookstores, antique shops and traders of cultural objects. True to its title, Guozijian envelopes visitors in an atmosphere of history and culture.



An old admission slip with the student's name and description: "medium build, square face and no beard"

An archway with glazed tiles in the Imperial Academy

Photos by Sherry Wu

Top academy in ancient times

Guozijian Street, built in the Yuan Dynasty (1271 – 1368), survived the succeeding Ming and Qing dynasties and the Republican Period to emerge intact in the New China. The street is famous for its *paifang*, or archways, the representative architecture of ancient times. It has four *paifang*, including one at the street entrance with the inscription "Guozijian," and another with "Chengxian Jie," which became the street's name in the Qing Dynasty.

The Imperial Academy, called Guozijian, was the country's highest educational institute and the state's education supervisory office in the Yuan, Ming and Qing. Formerly called Taixue, the academy was attended by scholarship students as well as members of the nobility.

An Imperial Academy was built in the seat of power of each dynasty, thus there were such places in Xi'an, Luoyang, Kaifeng and Nanjing. There were a northern and a southern capital during Ming, so a Guozijian was constructed each in Beijing and Nanjing.

Although Beijing's Imperial Academy was the educational center of three dynasties, most of its buildings were built during Ming. It was the country's last Imperial Academy and the only surviving one.

On its central axes are Jixian Gate, Taixue Gate, Glazed Memorial Arch, Biyong Hall, Yilun Hall and Jingyi Pavilion. Biyong Hall, the academy's main building, was where Qing emperors lectured. Ministers and scholars stood outside the hall to listen, while some officials stood beside the emperor to repeat everything he said in a loud voice for the hard of hearing.

The academy also served as a center for advanced research among the country's top scholars, as well as those from foreign countries.

The Imperial Academy has three courtyards. Rooms in the west courtyard that used to serve as classrooms have been turned into exhibition halls, which feature the history of imperial examinations. Among the objects on display are lists of the academy's students and admission slips. Unlike school admission slips today, the old ones did not have a student's picture; instead it contained the student's description, for instance, "medium build, square face and no beard."

Visitors to the exhibition halls will get a glimpse of how difficult the imperial examinations were, and how competitive. Parents nowadays visit the academy to pray for their child before he or she takes a crucial examination. Right before Gaokao, the National College Entrance Exam, last week, many came to write their wishes on the visitors' logbook.

A Confucian temple and museum

A Confucian temple is located on the street's east side, beside the academy. It was built in 1302 in the Yuan Dynasty and served as an altar in which intellectuals during the Yuan, Ming and Qing paid their respects to Confucius.

The temple is now a museum of ancient artifacts: engraved stones, doorbells, drums, bronze and jade utensils, paintings and calligraphic works, musical instruments and money.

Continued on page 21...

... continued from page 20



Dacheng Gate, or the Gate of Great Accomplishment, at the Confucian temple

CFP Photo



Bells and drums at the temple



The temple's stone steles

Its most impressive feature is a forest of stone steles inscribed with the name, origin and position of 5,000 people who passed the imperial examinations and thus became *jinshi*, the basic grade of a successful exam candidate. As many as 198 steles stand on both sides of the temple; three were erected in the Yuan, 77 in the Ming and the rest in the Qing.

Some famous personalities whose names were carved on the steles include Yu Qian, a Ming general, and Lin Zexu, an imperial envoy during the Opium Wars in the 19th century.

In the Qing Dynasty, before Emperor Qianlong headed to Biyong Hall to give a lecture, he would usually visit the Confucius temple to offer sacrifices to the philosopher.

Before the temple was restored two years ago, an event to mark Confucius' birthday took place here every September. The celebration, which showcased songs and dances from the Qing dynasty, is expected to recontinue this September.

Getting to Guozijian Street: Take Subway Line 2 or Line 5 to Yonghegong station, then walk south for 200 meters; or take Bus 13, 116, 117 or 684 to Yonghegong stop

Admission: 20 yuan for the Imperial Academy and Confucian temple (students get 50 percent off with their ID card)

Tel: 8401 1977

Other sights of Guozijian Street

Wensheng Sinology Bookstore

This bookstore, opposite the Imperial Academy, opened last week. All the Confucian classics are sold here, including *The Four Books* (*The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Confucian Analects* and *The Works of Mencius*) and *The Five Classics* (*The Book of Songs*, *The Book of History*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Book of Rites* and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*). Also available are books related to Beijing's culture and history and current national best sellers. There are tables and chairs where shoppers can take a break with a book in hand.



Various stone carvings at Songtang Museum



Tu'erye, an old toy that dates back to the Ming Dynasty, sits at the entrance of Shengtangxuan

Photos by Sherry Wu

Confucius' teachings have deeply influenced Chinese culture.

CFP Photo



Ming and Qing structures and Chinese scholar trees can be found at the ancient temple.

Songtang Museum of Carving

At the entrance to Guozijian Street, on the same side as the academy, is this private museum located in a courtyard. It contains wood, stone and brick carvings.

Most of the pieces come from old residences; some were abandoned during home demolitions and were later bought by the museum owner. One of the displays, a stone doorstep, was discovered in an abandoned temple.

Some of the museum's collections have national importance: One Buddhist statue is said to be a thousand years older than the one at the Lama Temple; a dark jade horse carving is the only one remaining in a two-piece set that used to be at the Old Summer Palace before the Allied Forces invaded; a pair of *mendun*, or gate pier, once belonged to a mansion in the Yuan Dynasty.

For an admission fee of 10 yuan, the museum curator is happy to introduce their treasures to visitors.

Shengtangxuan Store of Old Toys

A huge statue of Shouxing or the God of Longevity marks the entrance to this small shop that sells traditional toys and gadgets.

One of Shengtangxuan's special items is Tu'erye, a clay sculpture that incorporates the image of a human and a rabbit. This traditional old Beijing toy, which was invented in the Ming Dynasty, is available in a variety of sizes; the smallest one costs 30 yuan.

The store also sells many cloth toys, including the colorful and popular rag horses. Shoppers can choose from hundreds of horse designs, some with carriages, some with human riders.

Most of the toys are hand-made by folk artists and craftsmen, which consign their products to the shop. At least 20 folk artists displayed their creations at Shengtangxuan.

Dining

Spoil him

This Father's Day, dad can sample all of his favorites like Cinnamon Apple and Spiced Pecan French Toast, Eggs Benedict and freshly baked breakfast pastries. Dad can also fill up on items from the carving station like Smoked Beef Brisket and Herb Garlic Roasted Turkey. Other items include herb-crusted Atlantic salmon, omelets and irresistible Chocolate Fondue. Our open bar makes the day a salutation to fatherhood.

Where: Hilton Beijing, Hilton Beijing, 1 Dongfang Lu, Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District
When: June 21

Cost: 288 yuan, includes unlimited soft drinks and local beer; 348 yuan, includes unlimited soft drinks, local beer and unlimited Mumm champagne spirits; all prices subject to 15 percent service charge

Tel: 5865 5020



Magnifique Father's Day

Father's Day is the time for the special man of the house: pamper him with the Magnifique Sunday Brunch. A lavish buffet with seasonal white asparagus awaits, so enjoy it with dad. Let the day be a chance to show your affection.

Where: VIC, Sofitel Wanda Beijing, 93 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District
When: June 21

Cost: 288 yuan, includes fresh juice, wine, local beer and soft drinks; 378 yuan, includes Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin Champagne
Tel: 8599 6666 ext. 6521

Give dad a break

Celebrate Father's Day with our sumptuous Australian-style BBQ buffet featuring mini steak, mini lamb cutlet and an assortment of sausages, fresh garden salads and decadent desserts.

Where: Serenity Garden, Hilton Beijing Wangfujing, 8 Wangfujing Dong Jie, Dongcheng District

When: June 21, 11:30 am - 2:30 pm

Cost: 188 yuan, includes free beer for all dads; subject to 15 percent service charge

Tel: 5812 8888 ext. 8411

Fresh abalone and prawn promotion

Summer is the best season for fresh abalone and prawns. If you are longing for a seafood treat that is worth your money, you will be excited to know that chef Tian Qiuming has prepared an array of creative seafood dishes including White Prawn Baked with Salted Duck Egg Yolk, Sauteed Fresh Abalone with King Oyster Mushrooms in Chili Sauce, and Stewed Fresh Abalone with American Ginseng in Superior Soup.

Where: 21st Floor Restaurant, The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel Beijing, 10 Dong Sanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District
When: July 1-31
Tel: 6590 5566



Hotel

Havana Bar reborn

Forget about the outside world and make your life a little sweeter with a dash of Havana, the most authentic Cuban-style bar. Thursday is Ladies' Night, Friday is Pink Night, Saturday is Disco Party Night and Sunday is Love Songs Night. Its range of Latin and Cuban cocktails comes in fancy cocktail glasses with exotic fruit decorations. The bar offers outdoor seating during summer.

Where: Havana Bar, Grand Millennium Beijing, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 5 pm - 2 am next day

Tel: 6530 9383

Kids On Us offer

Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts welcomes the summer break with its Kids On Us offer that allows children under age 12 to eat, play and stay free.

Kids On Us offers great savings for families including an extra bed in the parents' room for up to two children at no additional cost and complimentary breakfast, lunch and dinner from the resort's children's menu. Various recreational facilities, such as the adventure zone, trapeze and nature trail, are available at no charge. This offer is available at seven Shangri-La resorts in Penang, Malaysia; Sentosa and Singapore, as well as Cebu and Boracay in the Philippines.

When: before September 30

Aviation

A380 to fly to Pearl of the Orient

Singapore Airlines will fly the world's largest passenger aircraft, the Airbus A380, on its Singapore-Hong Kong route starting July 9. The daily A380 flights will replace existing daily B777-300ER service to Hong Kong. The operation of the 471-seat Singapore Airlines A380 to Hong Kong represents an increase of 10 percent in seat capacity to the city. Customers travelling on the Flight will experience unrivalled standards of luxury and sophistication in air travel.



Tourism

Helsinki and Tampere launch new tourism Web sites

Helsinki and Tampere tourist bureaus launched new tourism Web sites. Both feature comprehensive information about cities' travel services, attractions and events in Finnish, English and Swedish. Up-to-date tourism information is available in eight other languages.

Web site: gotampere.fi, visithelsinki.fi

Hike to the highest wild Great Wall tower and folk opera

Experience the unique tangible and intangible heritage of the Great Wall, the highest beacon tower in Beijing and a unique folk opera performed by villagers. 90 Percent Travel offers transportation, an English speaking guide, a farm lunch, drinking water and traveler's insurance.

When: June 27

Cost: 290 yuan, 20 percent discount for children 16 and under

Tel: 15117916648

Athens ranks high among tourism destinations

Despite unfavorable economic conditions and the impact of the global economic crisis, the capital of Greece ranks among the top destinations for convention tourism according to a recent report. Athens has enjoyed one of the most impressive increases of all city destinations and took 15th place as a sought-after city for convention tourism. Its rank was confirmed by the results of the International Congress and Convention Association report on the international conference market and global rankings of conference destinations for 2008.



(By Sun Feng)

Apartment



The Sandalwood offers Oasis of Tranquility

The Sandalwood - Beijing Marriott Executive Apartments, Marriott's second executive apartment complex in Beijing, opens in July to offer residents an unprecedented level of sophisticated luxury.

The Sandalwood beckons individuals and families to its affordable luxury apartments with an exceptional level of services and facilities. Each apartment was designed by world-renowned interior design consultant Karen Wang and offers both wired and wireless Internet connections in all apartments and common areas. Apartment facilities include a 24-hour fitness center; heated indoor infinity swimming pool and oversized children's playroom with a distinctive private Residents' Lounge with open cooking areas.

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Wang Yu at wangyu2008@ynet.com.

Deformed man toilet? Fun, but more a culture shock

By Huang Daohen

Hands up if you've ever bought a T-shirt or souvenir item with Chinglish words on it for your loved ones while travelling around the country. Did you have any idea what the words meant? Or didn't you care and just grabbed the thing because it looked cool?

This attitude may be one of the reasons behind the growth of Chinglish, my American friend Benjamin, an English-language teacher who is also studying Chinese here, said after I told him about my first encounter with Chinglish: the "deformed man toilet."

Three years ago, during my first year as a journalist, I was assigned to do a story on the city's newly constructed public toilets.

I surveyed the places and saw that one of their new features was a stall for the disabled. In my report, I used "deformed man toilet" to describe these stalls without giving it a second thought. I didn't realize how embarrassed I would be with the mistake until Tom, one of our copy editors from England, burst into laughter the following day while going through my story.

"A deformed thing," Tom said, "usually refers to the subject of ridicule or general horror. To be honest, a deformed man is a circus freak. I don't think there's a special place for a deformed man," he said, adding that the proper phrase is "public toilet for the disabled."

Benjamin laughed at the end of my story then said in a serious tone, "Though Chinglish occurs because of misuse or misunderstanding of English phrases, it results more in culture shock and no one really minds what it says," he said.

Ben thinks Chinglish may be funny, but should not be made an object of fun.

Echoing my story, he shared one of his own experiences with language barriers. In the US, there was once a Chinese man who just arrived in the country for work.



After a few months had passed and he had learned some English, he ventured out on his own to rent a house. He told one landlady, "I eat you, sleep you, how much a week?" In Chinese, this meant, How much shall I pay for room and board each week?

The woman was shocked by his words and became infuriated. This story illustrates a typical situation that occurs when people from different cultures communicate. It's typical culture shock, Ben said.

The public's obsession with Chinglish is not merely a source of good jokes; more importantly, it's a great opportunity for Westerners to understand the differences between

their culture and Chinese culture, Ben said.

He mentioned the phrase "long time no see," which indicates how the speaker has not seen the other person for a long time. The phrase, which is grammatically incorrect and awkward, has become standard among native English speakers.

Chinglish is becoming more and more popular as Chinese people seek to improve their English. Ben thought that in the future, it could even become an accepted variation of standard English.

Don't forget the Chinglish phrases we discuss on this page every week – they may become fashionable in the future.

Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week.

Local professor: Zhu Shida

1. A decision for you and I

According to contemporary grammatical theory, a first person pronoun that appears after the preposition must take the objective form "me." So the line above should be "a decision for you and me." However, if we look at literature, there are numerous examples to the contrary. Shakespeare, in the *Merchant of Venice*, says, "All debts are cleared between you and I." Lord Byron once complained, "which, between you and I, I wish was swallowed up by an earthquake, provided my eloquent mother was not in it." The current rule was established in the 19th century, and that is why US President Barack Obama was scoffed at by grammar junkies when he said, "a very personal decision for Michelle and I" and "graciously invited Michelle and I." The 42nd and 43rd presidents of the US did too say, "invited Hillary and I" and "between Laura and I," respectively. This is considered a vulgarity in linguistics. Nevertheless, grammarians believe that this phrase, spoken even by educated people, will have to be "a decision for you and me."

2. Join the author explore the history of the hutongs in Beijing.

When we say "He urges them to work harder," the verb "to urge" takes the complex objects "them" and "to work harder." However, there are some verbs that cannot take complex objects; "to join" is one of them. You cannot say: to join somebody to do something. If you mean "He will join us on a Beijing tour next Sunday," you cannot say, "He will join us to tour Beijing next Sunday." Similarly, you can only say, "Join the author in exploring the history of the hutong in Beijing."

3. We are committed to reorganize our firm.

"To commit" is a transitive verb, meaning "to do or perform; to hand over for safekeeping." For instance, The sick man committed himself to a doctor's care. The judge committed the thief to prison. I will commit my experience of my early life into writing. Note that the set phrase is "to commit somebody to something"; therefore, one is committed to something or to doing something. The word "to" in the original sentence is a preposition, not an infinitive, so it should be, "We are committed to reorganizing our firm." Or, We commit ourselves to reorganizing the firm. We are committed to the reorganization of the firm.

Native speaker: Penny Turner

1. A decision for you and I

Professor Zhu gave an interesting lesson in grammar, as well as literature history and current events. If you want to go according to the grammatical rule, here is a memory aid that can help you out in tricky situations like the one above: Ask yourself what first person pronoun you would use without adding the other pronoun or the proper noun, whichever is the case. ("A decision for me" and "graciously invited me"; you would not say "A decision for I" or "graciously invited I," would you?) Then, just drop in the other pronoun or noun where it belongs. You will end up with "A decision for you and me" and "graciously invited Michelle and me."

2. Join the author explore the history of the hutongs in Beijing.

I agree with the Professor's corrections and explanation. Because the line included a Chinese word – *hutong* – and because our daily writings are invariably peppered with Chinese words, it is important to remember that foreign words when used in an English sentence do not take an "s" even when used in the plural sense. Some examples: Many of Beijing's *siheyuan* have vanished. The boy ordered a dozen *baozi* for lunch. The *mendun* found at the entrances of old homes are considered art pieces.

3. We are committed to reorganize our firm.

Like the Professor said, one is committed to "something" or to "doing something," which denotes a noun. "To reorganize" is a verb; the problem is solved once you transform the word into a noun – "reorganizing" the firm or "the reorganization" of the firm.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to wangyu2008@ynet.com together with your name and address.

May your satisfaction sincerely aroused by me

By Tiffany Tan

The only thing this one can possibly arouse is bewilderment, which can then lead to a headache after turning the words around and around to decode what they mean. (May your arousal be sincerely satisfied by me? This makes sense, but is a sign more at home in a brothel.)

A translation of the Chinese words does not provide the solution. It says something to the effect of "My sincerity in exchange for your satisfaction." The phrasing



and logic are very Chinese, and are quite baffling to foreigners. But you do get a glimpse of the writer's values: sincerity, a fair deal, customer satisfaction.

How about this? We hope you are satisfied with our heartfelt service and will visit us again. Or, We aim to please with our heartfelt service. (Why does it still sound like a sign better suited to a massage parlor?) Why not just go with this: We hope you are happy with your purchase, come again. Short and simple. No room for embarrassments.



Scene 1: International Apartment Building

(Walter arrives at his apartment. He looks up at the building as if inspecting it. He takes out his keys, opens the door and walks in.)

Walter (W): Hello?

(Walter screams too and then slams the door, stepping back into the hallway.)

African Woman (AW): Stay away from me! (She has a West African accent.)

W: It's OK. I'm not going ...

AW: Leave me alone! My boyfriend is coming home!

W: I'm not going to hurt you.

AW: Who are you? What are you doing in here!?

W: This is my apartment.

AW: What do you mean? This apartment does not belong to you. How did you get in?

W: My name is Walter Vale. I have keys. It's my ...

(Suddenly Walter is pushed up against the wall. Hard.)

Man's Voice: What the fuck?! Who are you?! Zainab?!

Zainab: I'm in here! He is crazy!

W: Stop it! I am not ...

Man's Voice: Shut up!

W: OK. OK. This is my apartment. I've owned it for 25 years.

Man's Voice: So why haven't you been here!?

W: I live in Connecticut. I haven't used it for a long time.



The Visitor (2008)

Movie of the week:

The movie is about harmony.

Dr. Walter Vale is a 62-year-old economics professor who coasts through life without vision or passion. During a business trip to New York, he encounters several illegal immigrants from Africa and the Middle East. The group teaches him the secret of music and how to live in harmony with others: something lost in a post-September 11 America.

The movie tells a truth: the world is a nice place if you find the harmony between yourself and the outside world.

Synopsis

Dr. Walter Vale (Richard Jenkins) does not want to go to a New York City conference to present his paper: unfortunately, the final decision rests with the dean of his department.

When Walter arrives in New York, he discovers someone bathing in his tub: Zainab (Danai Jekesai Gurira), a young Senegalese woman who is as surprised to see him as he is to see her. His bed is occupied by Tarek (Haaz Sleiman), a young Syrian man who sublet Vale's neglected apartment from someone Vale does not even know.

He is unwilling to throw the pair out on the street and allows them to remain. As they come to know each other, Tarek teaches Vale to play the djembe and to understand the plight of illegal aliens – particularly Muslim ones since 9/11



Scene 2: Mr. Shah's office

(Walter and Mouna are talking to Mr. Shah.)

Mr. Shah (S): And what happened after the hearing?

Mouna (M): We appealed. It took two years.

S: And your appeal was denied?

M: Yes.

S: Then they should have sent you a bag-and-baggage letter which basically tells you where to **show up (1)** and be deported. But you didn't receive it?

M: No.

S: You sure?

M: Yes. I would remember this.

S: Did you move?

M: Yes. Eventually we had to. But we had our mail **advanced (2)**.

(Mr. Shah is satisfied.)

S: Well, it wouldn't be the first time that happened. And pre-9/11 it wasn't much of a priority **tracking people down (3)**.

W: So if they didn't get the letter then does this help us?

S: It keeps our chances alive. If they got it and just ignored it then we couldn't push to reopen the case.

M: So you can help him?

S: It's still a **long shot (4)**. Like I said, the government's approach has changed radically.



Scene 3: Walter's home

(In Walter's room, he stares at Mouna for a moment and then turns down the bed sheets.)

M: It's my fault. What happened to Tarek. I did receive the letter telling us to leave. I threw it away. I never told him. We were here for three years by the time the letter arrived. I had found a job. Tarek was in school. Everyone told me not to worry. That the government did not care. And it appeared to be true. And then, after some time, you forget. You think that you really belong.

W: It's not your fault.

M: Have you visited your son in London?

W: No. Not yet.

M: You should visit him ... Zainab and I picked it out especially for you.

W: Thank you. It's very nice.

M: Let me see.

W: I like it.

M: So do I. You look cool.

W: Cool?

M: Yes. You are very cool, Walter ... I should go. Thank you, Walter. For everything.

W: I don't want you to go.

M (whispers): I don't want to go, **habibi (5)**



Vocabulary

- show up:** appear at
- advanced:** move or change in advance
- track people down:** pursue someone; hunt down
- a long shot:** small chance of success
- habibi:** dear (Arabic)

(By Zhao Hongyi)